



The Scottish  
Government

Review of the Multi-Agency  
Resource Service (MARS) and the  
Scottish Child Care and  
Protection Network (SCCPN)

**REVIEW OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESOURCE SERVICE  
(MARS) AND THE SCOTTISH CHILD CARE AND  
PROTECTION NETWORK (SCCPN)**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

The Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS)  
The Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)  
The National Child Protection Committee Coordinator  
Aims and Research Questions

#### 2 METHODOLOGY

Approach  
Documentary Analysis  
Understanding the Views of Stakeholders  
Understanding the Views of Target Groups  
Analysis

#### 3 What is the MARS?

Introduction  
Vision, Aims and Objectives  
Key Stakeholders/Partners  
Target Groups  
The MARS Activities and Outcomes  
Measuring Success  
Staffing  
Sustainability/Funding

#### 4 Short Term Outcome 1: To Improve the Accessibility and Use of Existing Child Protection Knowledge and Expertise

Introduction  
Part 1: Raising Awareness by Communication and Networking  
Reach  
Effectiveness of Communication and Networking Activity  
Overall Satisfaction  
Reasons for using Website  
Impact

Part 2: Developing Communities of Expertise  
Aims and Objectives  
Representation on the CoE  
Becoming a Member  
Memorandum of Understanding  
Effectiveness  
Feedback  
Impact

**5 Short Term Outcome 2: To Improve and Develop the Knowledge, Skills and Expertise of Child Protection Professionals**

Introduction

Short Life Working Groups (SLWG)

Ad-hoc Analytical Work

Training and Development

The National Training Framework

Impact

**6 What is the SCCPN?**

Introduction

Vision, Aims and Objectives

The SCCPN Advisory Group

Working Groups

Membership of the Working Groups

The SCCPN Coordinator

Impact of the Coordinator Role

Membership of the network

The SCCPN Activities

Measuring Success

How does the SCCPN differ from other Research Centres?

Staffing

Sustainability/Funding

**7 Short Term Outcome 3: Increase Access to and use of Research Evidence in Practice**

Introduction

Awareness Raising Activities

Effectiveness of Awareness Raising

SCCPN Website

Networking

Dissemination Activities

Effectiveness of Dissemination Activities

Impact

**8 Short Term Outcome 4: Increase the Relevance, Utility and Strength of the Evidence Base in Practice**

Introduction

Secondary Research Activity

Generating New Evidence through Research or Evaluation Activities

Collaborations

Challenges

**9 Influencing National Policy**

Introduction

Background

Model of Policy Influence

Overall

- 10 Value for Money**
  - Introduction
  - Cost-Effectiveness of the MARS
  - Structures and Processes
  - Views from Stakeholders on Value for Money
  - Future Studies
  
- 11 Merging the MARS and the SCCPN**
  - Introduction
  - Support
  - Role
  - A Local Service provided Nationally
  - Reservations
  
- 12 Conclusions**

**ANNEX A: Web Survey Questionnaire**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Background**

The Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS) was launched in 2009 as a national resource for professionals working in the field of child protection. One of its primary functions is to coordinate the exchange of knowledge across agencies and also to broker and facilitate links across the child protection sector in Scotland.

The Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN) works closely with the MARS in developing and disseminating research knowledge and evidence and ensuring that professionals working within the field of child protection have access to the information that they need.

Both resources are currently based at the University of Stirling and there are plans to merge the two into one central resource in the near future. However, as yet, there is no confirmation of future funding beyond 2012.

The Scottish Government Children and Families Analytical Service Unit have conducted a review of both the MARS and the SCCPN with a view to informing future development and sustainability. The aims of the review were to understand the effectiveness and impact of the MARS and the SCCPN activities to date (including any influence on national policy and local practice), and the extent to which they are perceived to be providing good value for money.

### **Methods**

The review involved the collection of data from a range of sources. Interviews with key stakeholders were conducted, including staff from the MARS and the SCCPN, the Scottish Government and representatives from health, social work, police, education, academia and voluntary sector backgrounds. In addition, a review was undertaken of the MARS and SCCPN strategic documents and data on events attendance, website hits, requests received etc. Finally a web survey was conducted which generated a response from 332 child protection professionals with follow up telephone interviews conducted with a small sample of practitioners.

### **Key Findings**

#### **MARS**

- There has been substantial effort made by the staff at the MARS to raise awareness and increase use of their resource and the evidence suggests that these activities are reaching a significant number of the target population. However there is more that can be done both in terms of raising awareness and clarifying the purpose of the resource, particularly within the health and education sectors.
- The majority of requests received by the MARS to date have been for signposting to relevant research or resources, with around one quarter relating to support with specific child protection cases. Those who had used the MARS for direct support reported an overall positive experience.

- The MARS involvement with the Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews was cited by many stakeholders as one of the MARS' biggest successes and the most influential on both national policy and local practice.
- Most stakeholders believed that the value for money that the MARS can provide is through it being a national resource that can disseminate learning and best practice for the benefit of all, thereby providing local areas significant efficiency savings.
- The majority of stakeholders believed that there is a continuing need for the knowledge exchange and support role that the MARS provides within the child protection community and that the MARS has developed a good reputation to date but that there may be merit in refocusing its priorities to strengthen its usefulness.

## **SCCPN**

- As with the MARS, the SCCPN has conducted a wide range of successful awareness raising and dissemination activities to increase the accessibility and use of research evidence in practice. The evidence shows that those who are familiar with the network are also likely to report familiarity with the MARS showing the two are very much interlinked.
- The recent seminar series and other events organised and facilitated by the SCCPN were highly regarded by the majority of attendees and were thought likely to have significant influence on policy and practice through the opportunity to open dialogue and stimulate debate within the child protection community.
- Stakeholders widely acknowledged the significant contribution of the network in terms of reviewing existing evidence and pulling this together in an accessible format to increase the relevance and utility for practitioners.
- There was wide support for the role of the SCCPN Coordinator who was thought to play a pivotal role in the effective functioning of the network and was highly valued both in terms of efficiency savings for members of the network and also the added value that the current post holder brings in terms of knowledge, skills and experience.
- Most stakeholders felt that the original aims of the network are still valid and that it plays a useful role in improving the accessibility of evidence for practice in collaboration with the MARS, however, there were challenges identified relating to how the priorities of the network are set in the future to respond best to the needs of practitioners at a local level.

## **The Future**

There was a strong view that the proposed merger of the MARS and the SCCPN (and National CPC Coordinator) was a logical and practical next step and that the combination of the two would provide a more effective and efficient resource for the wider child protection community. There may be merit in reviewing the original objectives of both the MARS and the SCCPN at this stage in light of suggestions for development made by stakeholders as part of this review which include a stronger emphasis being placed on the dissemination of best practice and learning by a central resource for the benefit of all.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of a review of the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS) and the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN), based at the University of Stirling.

The review was carried out by the Scottish Government Analytical Services Unit (Children and Families) between December 2010 and May 2011. The overall aim of the review is to provide a robust overview of how effective, valued and worthwhile the MARS and the SCCPN are, with a view to informing future sustainability, funding and development.

### 1.1 The Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS)

The Multi-Agency Resource Service was established in response to the Western Isles report, published by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) in 2005. This report tells the story of three children and their neglect and abuse over a period of many years. 13 adults were arrested in relation to their alleged abuse but the case against all of them was subsequently dropped. The report provides the history and lessons learned from this case and provides 31 recommendations for further action aimed at improving policy and procedures and preventing this situation from arising again. Recommendation 27 states:

*“The Scottish Executive should establish a **multi-agency national resource** for those working with complex child protection issues. This should offer consultancy and co-working for staff in relevant agencies. It should set up a managed care network, based on the model of managed clinical networks, and establish a register of recognised experts who could be called upon if required. It should set up a **database of relevant research** and contribute expertise to qualifying training and continued professional development for staff working in relevant agencies. The Scottish Executive should, in conjunction with this resource, develop a national register of staff suitably qualified in joint investigative interviewing.*

An Inspection into the Care and Protection of Children in Eilean Star, 2005

This particular recommendation was felt to be a potential solution to the fact that the staff involved in the Western Isles case did not have sufficient expertise or knowledge on which to draw. Smaller local authorities such as the Western Isles do not necessarily have the exposure to this type of complex child protection case on a regular basis and therefore staff are not able to build up the kind of expertise and knowledge required to deal with these situations when they do occur. Furthermore, the field of child protection can cover such a diverse range of issues and specialisms that staff cannot be expected to become an ‘expert’ in all areas. A national resource was therefore considered to be an appropriate solution to this gap in the knowledge base to provide a central point where agencies could gain access to specialist advice and support as and when required. This support may also include help with strategic planning, operational management or practitioner-level support.

Similar recommendations were also made in Lord Clyde’s report as part of the Orkney Inquiry in 1992 which also suggested that a central resource be set up to

provide expertise and advice to smaller local authorities such as Orkney who found themselves handling a major sexual abuse inquiry.

A working group containing representation from education, police, health, social work, the voluntary sector and central government considered the best way forward in setting up this national resource. A consultation exercise was conducted with a range of child protection professionals in 2007-2008 and included consideration of the potential model and role of a multi-agency resource. It was agreed that a small unit with 2-3 posts would be best placed to deliver the proposed functions, staffed by individuals with the appropriate experience and skills in child protection. This resource would not itself provide detailed support and expertise in all circumstances and situations but would advise and help identify what support was needed and then broker arrangements between organisations and individuals. This small unit was to be supported by a larger multi-disciplinary steering group with links across professions and locations.

The MARS was formally launched by Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, at a conference at Stirling University on 6 October 2009 who stated:

*“This new pioneering hub of expertise – another UK first – is allowing child protection professionals to seek advice from specialists with decades of experience in this area...Having just completed the most in-depth examination ever of child protection services in Scotland, we have the clearest picture of measures on the ground and where there are successes and difficulties. This new MARS unit will further help us build on the good practice across Scotland, allowing areas with shortcomings to learn from what works and drive consistency, while we work to protect children in communities across the country.”*

The MARS is currently funded by the Scottish Government for a period of three years until May 2012.

## **1.2 The Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)**

The SCCPN was first set up in 2006 on an informal basis by a number of academics and key stakeholders who saw it as an opportunity to work collaboratively across Scotland within the field of child care and protection for the purpose of generating research and improving dissemination. Funds of £45K, received from a range of sources, supported the SCCPN's initial development and outputs which included an audit of all Scottish Child Care and Protection Research (2007) and a study of the role of nurses and midwives within child protection (2007). It was then recognised by the Recommendation 27 working group that the SCCPN could play a pivotal role in developing and disseminating the research knowledge and evidence base, in collaboration with the MARS. As a result, a three year funding grant was provided by the Scottish Government (August 2008 – July 2011) for a Coordinator, the development of a shared website and for a series of dissemination events (see Chapter 6 for details). Additionally, Stirling University has agreed to fund the Co-ordinator post through to August 2012, in line with the MARS funding period.

### **1.3 The National Child Protection Committee Coordinator**

The National CPC Coordinator role was set up following feedback from Child Protection Committee Chairs. The National Coordinator is line managed within the MARS reporting to the Director of the MARS and has a distinct remit to work with CPCs on specific issues, to work with the wider child protection community and to work on priority areas within the MARS. The current post holder has been in place since June 2010 and is funded for three years. The role of the National CPC Coordinator is not part of the current review due to the short length of time in post.

### **1.4 Aims and Research Questions**

This review has sought to cover five broad research topics:

- 1) To what extent have the MARS/SCCPN delivered on their set aims and objectives and what processes have been put in place to meet these objectives?
- 2) To what extent have the MARS/SCCPN been successful in reaching their target audience and what has been their effectiveness and impact to date?
- 3) To what extent have the MARS/SCCPN influenced national child protection policy to date and how has this been achieved?
- 4) Do the MARS/SCCPN represent good value for money?
- 5) What are the future roles of the MARS/SCCPN? Are the original objectives still valid? Are the current structures best placed to deliver on these objectives?

It should be noted that both are relatively new organisations and have been in place for a relatively short period of time at the time of this review (in the case of the MARS, for 18-24 months). Any new development needs sufficient time to 'bed-in' which will include awareness raising, developing its activities and processes and enhancing its reputation and credibility over time. The full impact and effectiveness can therefore not be comprehensively evaluated until a later date.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section provides a summary of the methods used in this review and a profile of respondents to the web survey.

### **2.2 Approach**

Data was collected through:

- A review and analysis of a variety of the MARS and SCCPN key strategic and financial internal and published documents
- An analysis of the MARS and SCCPN data on event attendance, website use, requests received
- In-depth interviews with core members of the MARS and the SCCPN teams
- In-depth interviews with the National CPC Coordinator and the Scottish Government Child Protection Policy Team Leader
- Twenty telephone interviews with key stakeholders (including members of the MARS and SCCPN steering groups and Communities of Expertise)
- A web-based survey sent to 1024 professionals on the joint MARS/SCCPN mailing list
- Follow up telephone interviews with a sample of practitioners from the web-survey.

### **2.3 Documentary Analysis**

Documents for the review were gathered by the teams at the MARS and SCCPN and included:

- Strategic and operational plans, business and work plans, communications strategy, risk assessment, Memorandum of Understanding, Sustainability Plan
- Progress reports, papers, agendas and minutes from steering and working group meetings
- Job descriptions for key staff
- Newsletters and information on the MARS and SCCPN website
- Expenditure spreadsheets

#### *Monitoring Data and Statistical Information*

- Requests monitoring spreadsheet
- Google Analytics (website use)
- Details of attendance at MARS/SCCPN and other events
- Anonymous feedback forms from events and direct requests

## **2.4 Understanding the Views of Stakeholders**

Face to face interviews were conducted with key members of the MARS and the SCCPN teams including:

- Beth Smith, Director, MARS
- Jane Scott, Coordinator, MARS
- Fiona Mitchell, Coordinator, SCCPN
- Brigid Daniel, Chair, SCCPN
- Catriona Laird, National CPC Coordinator.

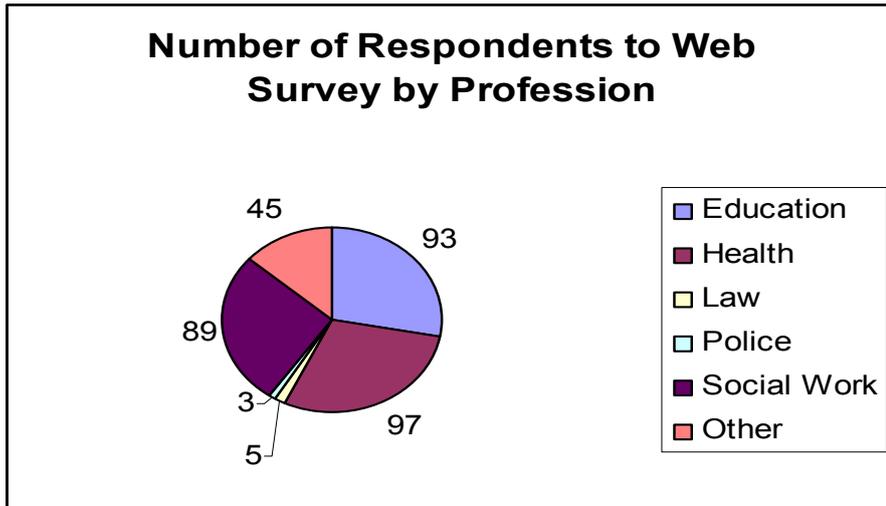
Twenty telephone interviews (approximately 20 minutes duration per interview) were conducted with key stakeholders from both the MARS and the SCCPN steering and working groups and Communities of Expertise. These included representation from the Police, Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), NHS, Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), Significant Case Review Working Group, the voluntary sector, and Edinburgh, Napier, Strathclyde and Dundee Universities.

A further in-depth interview was also conducted with the Head of Child Protection Policy in the Scottish Government.

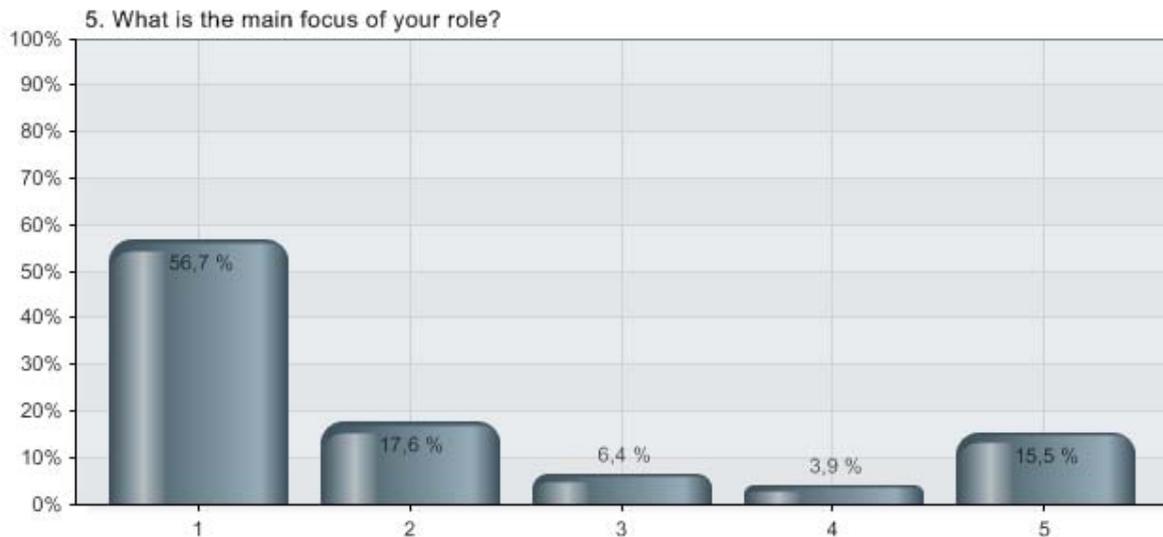
## **2.5 Understanding the Views of Target Groups**

A web survey was developed using Questback software (see Annex A for questionnaire) to gauge levels of awareness, use and effectiveness of the MARS and the SCCPN. A hyperlink to the survey was sent via email to all individuals and organisations on the joint MARS/SCCPN mailing list of which there are 1024 names. This mailing list had recently been extended by the MARS and SCCPN staff and included a combination of recipients who had previously received the regular newsletter/e-bulletin (around 200) and others who had only recently accepted the invitation to join the mailing list. Clearly, those recipients who had received the newsletter/e-bulletin previously were more likely to have shown higher levels of familiarity with both the MARS and the SCCPN (as compared with a completely random sample) and this should be borne in mind when analysing the results in terms of levels of awareness. It does, however, give a good insight into how the MARS and SCCPN are perceived and used by their target audience.

The web survey generated a response rate of 32%, (n=332). As shown below, there were very similar numbers of respondents from education, health and social work professions with significantly less for police and law.



The majority of these were from the public sector (85%, n=279), with 12% (n=40) from the voluntary sector and only 2% (n=8) from the private sector. The survey also reached a substantial number of practitioners with 57% (n=187) stating they had a practice-based role.



Alternatives	Percent	Value
1 Practice	56,7 %	187
2 Strategy	17,6 %	58
3 Policy	6,4 %	21
4 Research	3,9 %	13
5 Other, please specify	15,5 %	51
Total		330

Short telephone interviews were also carried out with a further five respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted as part of the web survey to explore their responses in more detail where appropriate.

## **2.6 Analysis**

A thematic framework for analysis of the qualitative data was developed based on a series of sub-themes including: rationale, aims, objectives and outcomes, main activities, measures of success, target groups, key stakeholders, roles and responsibilities, activities, priorities, effectiveness, barriers/challenges, impact (of Coordinator), value for money, future developments, suggestions for improvements, interface with the MARS/SCCPN.

## **CHAPTER 3: What is the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS)?**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of the MARS, including information on aims and objectives, key stakeholders, target groups, activities and outcomes, measures of success, staffing and funding arrangements. It therefore provides an important context for the review.

Data comes from the documentary analysis, interviews with the Director and Coordinator of the MARS and other key stakeholders.

### **3.2 Vision, Aims and Objectives**

The vision of the MARS is to deliver a coordinated national resource that will assist agencies and practitioners involved in protecting children to carry out their work effectively. This forms a vital part of the child protection framework in Scotland and forms a key part of the new National Child Protection Guidance in Scotland (2010)<sup>1</sup>. The development of the MARS is directly linked to helping achieve the following National Outcomes under the Scottish Government National Performance Framework:

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities.

It was originally envisaged that the MARS would have four main functions:

- 1) To coordinate the exchange of knowledge across agencies, in terms of the information itself and the people with the knowledge and expertise;
- 2) To broker and facilitate links across the child protection sector in Scotland and beyond to the UK and internationally;
- 3) To identify gaps in service provision or training needs to inform local and national policy developments; and
- 4) To contribute to the development and promotion of national strategic training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework.

It was suggested however that the activity of the MARS should primarily focus on the first two functions in the first instance, and, at a later date, contribute to the debate on potential gaps in service provision and training needs of the workforce. However information could be gathered about current training activities at the same time as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/09134441/0>

identifying areas of developing or good practice to inform evolving strategies<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, it was recognised that the functions of the MARS would evolve based on the demands for its services, and what the child protection sector finds helpful.

These functions have been translated into the four strategic objectives of the MARS, which are: 1) Communication and networking including identifying stakeholders needs 2) Developing Communities of Expertise; 3) Supporting the development of training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and 4) Securing long term funding and sustainability.

Stakeholders in this review saw the primary purpose of the MARS as enabling shared services, greater efficiency and common standards. A key issue for them was not to have the same thing done 32 times in each local authority area when it could be done once by the MARS for the benefit of all CPCs. They felt that the MARS should be about developing best practice, providing expert advice and contributing to policy developments. It should also be about trying to develop and establish a robust process that enables the exchange of experience, practice and ideas. Many people believed that the 'multi-agency' aspect was crucial and this is where its strength lies in that some professionals can become too 'insular' within their own fields without always looking to the bigger picture.

Some stakeholders felt that the focus of the MARS had changed from its original remit of setting up and establishing the Communities of Expertise (which was a more reactive role) to a larger (more proactive) role in terms of influencing policy and practice on a national scale with the work on Significant Case Reviews often cited (see Chapter 5). This was felt by many to be a strengthening of the MARS role rather than a weakening. Others felt that the MARS had recently focused more of its efforts on the long-term sustainability issue which they suggested may be why the Communities of Expertise had not grown as much as they had originally expected. It was however, also acknowledged that activity around future funding and sustainability was clearly necessary for the MARS.

Stakeholders noted that there was an overall need within the child protection community for greater co-ordination between national government and the wider child protection community and suggested that this may be achieved through the development of the National Child Protection Committee Chair's Forum and the appointment of the National CPC Coordinator. Stakeholders suggested that this more strategic national overview of priorities and developments will likely assist the MARS in focusing future planning and activities.

### **3.3 Key Stakeholders/Partners**

The MARS steering group consists of representation from the Scottish Government, social work, health, police, education, Child Protection Committees, SCRA, the Third Sector and other stakeholder organisations. The agreed purpose of the group is to:

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<sup>2</sup> Suggestions arising from the Recommendation 27 working group's consultation exercise in 2007/2008.

1. To provide strategic overview, advice and support
2. To provide credibility and demonstrate that the MARS is a priority for all agencies in Scotland
3. To provide advice and support in the continuing development of the MARS, including the development of a business plan for sustainability
4. To provide a range of networks for the MARS to access as necessary

According to the MARS team, one of the challenges of maintaining a steering group of this nature is that the members' attendance is often in addition to their already busy and often high profile 'day job'. It is also intended that one of the roles of steering group members is to act as an advocate for the MARS and promote it to the relevant networks. It was acknowledged however by several stakeholders that more could be done (by themselves) in this area. It was also suggested by stakeholders that there should continue to be wider calls for expressions of interest for other professionals to become involved in the MARS to ensure wide and continued interest and that there should be ongoing publicity and transparency around who the current members of the Steering Group are.

### **3.4 Target groups**

The MARS aims to offer a service to all employees working in child protection across a range of professions, including health, social work, education, Child Protection Committees (CPCs), police, the non-statutory and private sectors. Also, any organisation providing child protection services including statutory, non-statutory and private. It is also recognised that the MARS may be able to offer support on a more strategic level to both managers and policy-makers.

Most stakeholders viewed the CPCs as a key target group first and foremost and noted the significant effort of the MARS team who conducted a consultation exercise with all CPCs to establish links, increase awareness of the aims of the MARS and manage expectations. This was viewed by all as a useful and worthwhile activity, something which should be followed through on a regular basis and has resulted in good links being established with CPCs. Although, one stakeholder also expressed some concern that their organisation had not been involved with the work of the MARS as much as had been originally anticipated following this initial meeting.

In terms of engagement with frontline practitioners there was some doubt raised by several stakeholders as to whether staff do make full use of the MARS services with examples given of the police and health professionals having their own internal co-ordination groups who they would contact in the first instance, although it was also noted that they (police and health) were 'getting better' at recognising the usefulness of the MARS service as a resource. It should be noted however, that the MARS was not originally set up to replace existing networks and resources but rather to complement and fill any gaps in support needed by professionals.

It was also suggested that for frontline practitioners to make better use of the service there needs to be more done in terms of raising and maintaining awareness on a regular basis to allow for staff turnover and information overload (see Chapter 4 for more detail).

There were some concerns raised during the setting up of the MARS that if it were available for all staff to contact then the MARS may be overwhelmed with requests. Additionally, there was the possibility that the MARS may be drawn unwittingly into local arguments or disputes. It was therefore agreed that a gate keeping process should be put in place whereby individuals should access the service via their local CPC. This would help ensure a coordinated approach and ensure that organisations were clear in their reasons for requesting support. It was suggested by one stakeholder however that if the MARS is to be a valuable resource then it has to have open availability for everyone to contact for advice and support when needed and should therefore be marketed in a different way. It should be noted that at present, there is open access to the MARS website and the various resources posted there, and to the team for signposting to research, training materials and other publications.

### 3.5 The MARS Activities and Outcomes

MARS' objectives and activities are set out within their three year Strategic Plan and Operational Plan. If there are any ad-hoc requests or changes to the planned timetable then these are agreed by the wider team and the Director. The table below shows how these activities link to the MARS objectives. Each of these activities and what is known about their reach, effectiveness and impact will be described in greater detail in the following chapters.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Communication and Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conferences/seminars/workshops</li> <li>• Website launched 1 Dec 2009</li> <li>• Online discussion forum (MARStalk)</li> <li>• Newsletter/E-bulletin</li> <li>• Media coverage/ articles in professional publications</li> <li>• Leaflets/printed material</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>
Developing and supporting Communities of Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating, facilitating and sustaining CoEs</li> <li>• Developed Memorandum of Understanding</li> <li>• Partnerships with existing networks</li> <li>• Links with specialist child protection agencies across UK and elsewhere</li> <li>• Short Life Working Groups</li> </ul>
Supporting the development of training and CPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in partnership with SCCPN and National CPC Co-ordinator.</li> <li>• Participation in relevant forums</li> <li>• Dialogue with Scottish Government about National Training Framework</li> <li>• Sourcing trainers and training materials.</li> </ul>
Long-term funding and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing contribution to joint sustainability sub-group of the MARS and SCCPN</li> </ul>

In order to assess the effectiveness of the MARS to date, it will be necessary to find out whether their activities (or planned activities) have achieved (or are expected to achieve) their intended outcomes.

In order to do this, a logic model was developed which helps clarify the links between these activities and outcomes (see below). In this model, the aims and objectives of the MARS are not explicitly stated but rather what the MARS does (its key activities and outputs) are aligned with the changes it hopes to affect (outcomes). The activities listed in the model largely correspond to the activities listed above.

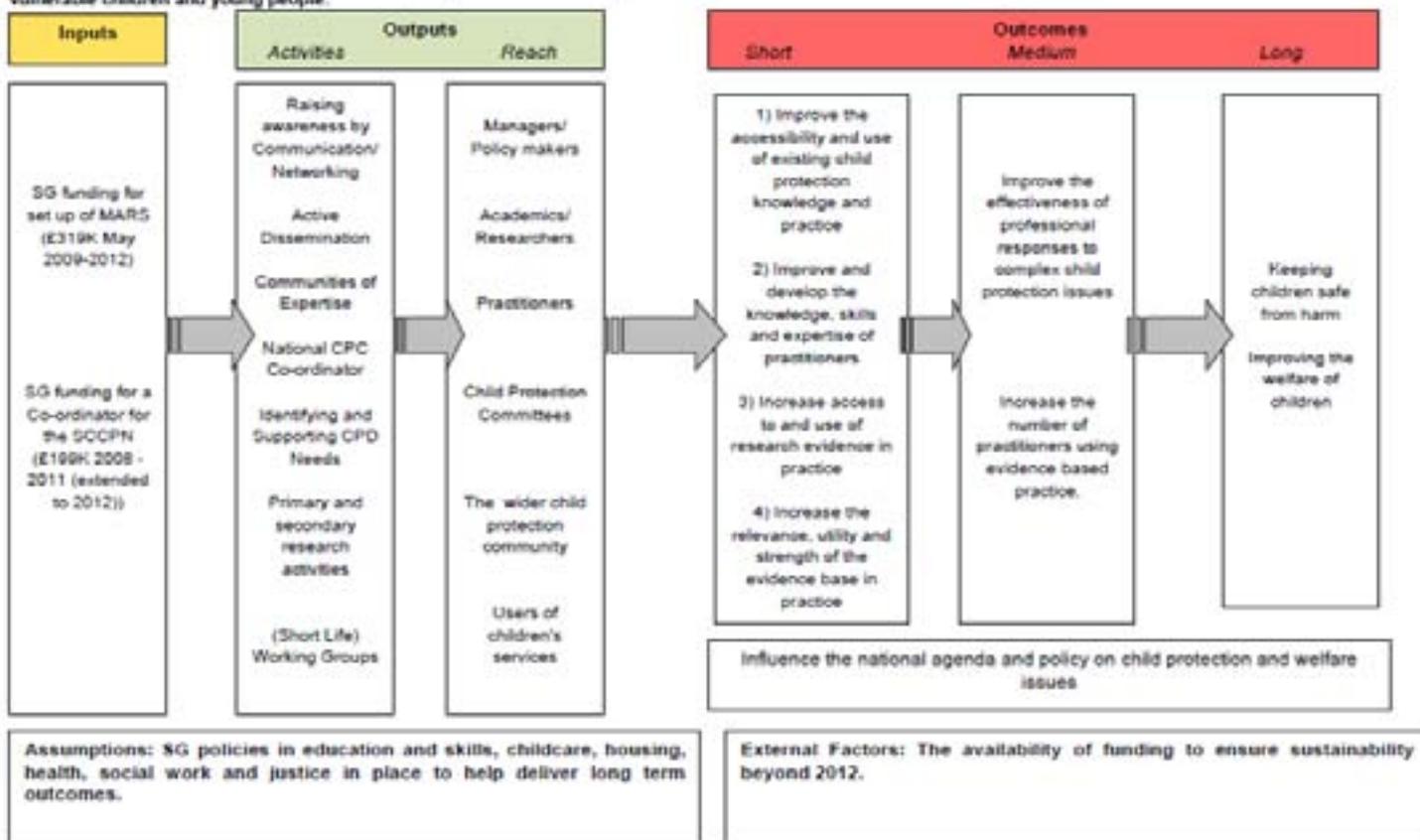
In assessing the MARS effectiveness, the intention of this review is to focus on the short-term outcomes shown in the logic model. These are:

- To increase the accessibility of existing child protection knowledge and expertise
- Improve and develop the knowledge, skills and expertise of practitioners.

Chapter 9 also explores whether and how the MARS has informed national child protection policy.

#### LOGIC MODEL

Situation: The Scottish Government provided three year funding for the set up of a Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS) and a Coordinator for the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN) in response to recommendations to ensure that those working with complex child protection issues had access to knowledge and expertise to support the development and delivery of evidence-based practice. It is essential to understand how these services contribute to better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.



### **3.6 Measuring Success**

The MARS has set out within its Business Plan what it considers to be measures of success, these include:

- Awareness of the MARS as a resource for practice
- Practice informed by research and practice wisdom
- Agencies able to resolve practice issues and develop solutions
- Added value to agencies including saving on staff time and resources
- The effective matching of skills and gaps
- Active communities of expertise available for the wider child protection community
- Specialist expertise is available for the wider child protection community;
- National solutions identified for common issues
- Practitioners can access good quality training materials based on research;
- A national overview of training needs has been developed
- A co-ordinated hub which contributes to local and national policy and is resourced long term.

Written feedback is requested from those who contact the MARS directly for advice or support. If there has been more intensive support required then this feedback will be gathered via a face to face interview with all those involved. It is recognised however that the impact of any particular advice or change to policy or practice may not be realised until a much longer period of time has elapsed.

Similarly, feedback meetings have been conducted with members of the Community of Expertise with the aim of bringing members together to share ideas and knowledge and contribute to the development of the MARS, and also to explore issues raised by the wider child protection community.

### **3.7 Staffing**

The MARS currently has three members of staff:

- One full-time Director (Beth Smith)
- One part-time (0.6 hours) Coordinator (Jane Scott)
- One full-time Business Manager (Scott Reid)

The full-time National CPC Coordinator (Catriona Laird) is also based at the MARS as of June 2010.

Line management is provided by the Head of the School of Applied Social Sciences, and the work is guided by a Steering Group chaired by Head of Child Protection Policy at the Scottish Government. The team meet on a regular basis as a group and individual meetings with the Director are held when required.

It was felt that the Coordinator role has evolved significantly from how it was first envisaged. The original remit was to help shape the MARS and move it from the

Recommendation 27 working group idea to something real, and to give support to the Director in doing so. However as time has moved on and requests have come in, more co-ordination, cross-cutting and analytical work has been required. The MARS team would ideally like to be able to explore further the types of requests which are coming through and make better use of the information which has been accessed to inform best practice on a wider basis.

When asked about any gaps in current staffing knowledge or skills, the team identified that it would be useful to have access to staff with more IT and technical skills and business systems knowledge within the team. It was also suggested that another useful addition (ideally), may be a 'practice development team' whereby specific practitioners could work on bespoke research which has been identified as being of particular interest to practitioners.

Being currently based at the University of Stirling, the MARS staff have access to some of the services provided by the University, for example, financial management systems and IT support.

### **3.8 Sustainability/Funding**

Funding for the MARS comes entirely from the Scottish Government, and from May 2009 has received £319,297 in total. This funding covers the period from 11/05/09 until 10/05/12, after which time there is no commitment by the Scottish Government to continue funding.

An additional £190,460 funding for the full time National CPC Coordinator role was provided by the Scottish Government for the period 28 June 2010 to 27 June 2013.

A joint MARS and SCCPN sustainability sub-group has been set up with the purpose of reviewing options for long-term funding and sustainability. This has now including merging the MARS and the SCCPN into one central 'Hub' (see Chapter 11). The sub-group contains representation from the SCCPN Advisory Group and the MARS, Steering Group.

***Chapter 4 and 5 will explore in more detail the progress made by the MARS towards achieving Short Term Outcomes 1 and 2, identified in the logic model above.***

## **CHAPTER 4: Short Term Outcomes 1 - To Improve the Accessibility and Use of Existing Child Protection Knowledge and Expertise**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the work the MARS has done to increase the accessibility and use of child protection knowledge and expertise among practitioners, agencies, managers and policy makers (its key target groups). This includes raising awareness by communication and networking, and developing Communities of Expertise.

The evidence presented in this section comes from interviews with key stakeholders including members of the existing Community of Expertise, an analysis of key documents and statistics including the MARS Communication Strategy, the web survey and interviews with practitioners.

### **4.2 Part 1: Raising Awareness by Communication and Networking**

As mentioned above, in the initial stages of the development of the MARS there was significant consultation activity undertaken by the MARS team having face to face meetings with all CPCs in Scotland. These visits were aimed at building knowledge and confidence, particularly in situations where CPCs may contact the MARS concerning complex and sensitive child protection cases.

The MARS has also developed a Communications Strategy which provides details of planned communication activities, key stakeholders, core scripts, timelines, target groups and communication channels.

Communication activities to date have included:

- Organising two annual conferences (in conjunction with the Centre for Learning in Child Protection (CLiCP) and SCCPN) focusing on Significant Case Reviews
- Attending and speaking at non-MARS events eg child protection conference chairs, children missing from education workshop
- Producing and distributing a regular newsletter/electronic digest and maintaining a mailing list
- Developing and maintaining a website for all child protection professionals which includes a resources page linking policy, practice and research across Scotland
- Developing and maintaining an online discussion forum for professionals called MARStalk, in conjunction with the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS)
- Media coverage in mainstream and specialist press
- Developing links with existing national and international networks.

Through these activities, the MARS team has made contacts with people and invited them to join Communities of Expertise (see below). The MARS also acts as a conduit for information about child protection from around Scotland and elsewhere, for example, the MARS website contains information about other non-MARS events across the UK.

### 4.3 Reach

- As of February 2011, there were 1024 people on the MARS/SCCPN joint mailing list who will each receive a copy of the monthly e-bulletin and any other relevant email alerts.
- A total of 88 booking forms were received for the MARS/SCCPN/CLiCP annual conference on Significant Case Reviews in November 2010. Delegates included representation from health, education, police, social work, CPCs, trainers, voluntary sector, and delegates from Ireland.
- In addition to the annual conference and other events organised by the MARS, staff keep a record of other events they attend to give presentations or host workshops or information stalls. In 2010, there are records of the MARS staff attending 15 events across Scotland, and presented or chaired at nine of these. Most of these events were targeted at child protection agencies and practitioners.
- The MARS has developed links with a range of existing national networks including: the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network, National Child Protection Committee Chairs Forum, Centre for Learning in Child Protection (CLiCP), Child Protection Nurse Advisors, CME co-ordinators, managed clinical networks, Strathclyde Police Public Protection Unit, voluntary sector organisations including the Woman's Support Project, Respect Me, and Roshni, Learning Networks, school to school co-ordinators, NSPCC training and consultancy, postgraduate students, learning networks the ADSW sub-group on child protection, the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People, HMIE and several more.
- Contact has been made with international networks and resources as and when required, eg National Clearing House of Australia, in connection with the review of child death policies in Australia and USA, and made contributions to research conducted by the Dept of Communities, Queensland, Australia into training models for professional staff in state child protection.
- The National CPC Coordinator has developed a number of links (raising awareness and promoting the MARS) since being in post with both CPCs and other established networks including those in the fields of domestic abuse, alcohol and drug partnerships, sexual abuse and adult survivors of child abuse.
- In the months between January 2010 and February 2011, the MARS website recorded a total of 2871 visits, of which 1690 were unique visitors from 10 countries, including the UK. The vast majority came from within the UK. On average the MARS website receives about 220 visits per month.
- The launch of the MARS was covered in several newspapers including the Herald (approx circulation: 60,000) and the Press and Journal (approx circulation: 82,000) and has been reviewed or mentioned in articles for several specialist publications including the SSSC News, Rostrum (British Association of Social Workers), Children in Sport newsletter, Holyrood Magazine Children's supplement, Young Minds magazine.
- A presentation was made to the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Committee on Children and Young People on the aims and objectives of the MARS which included attendance by a number of voluntary organisations working directly with children and young people.

- Webspaces - ([www.marstalk.org.uk](http://www.marstalk.org.uk)) the online discussion forum for professionals had 120 members as of May 2011. The National CPC Coordinator has also used MARStalk to highlight her own role and profile for a world café event in Edinburgh.
- The MARS maintains a spreadsheet containing information about types of requests which have been received and where the request originates from (note: details of the request itself have not been disclosed under confidentiality agreements). An analysis of this spreadsheet has shown that a total of **60 requests** (as of end March 2011) have come from all over Scotland, with 37 of these coming from different organisations (see map below for geographical spread of requests).

# Location of Requests received by the MARS (February 2009 – March 2011)

## MARS



Scale: 1:2,500,000  
Sources: SG delegate list (2011) mapped against GROS 2010 postcodes.

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Scottish Government, Geographic Information Science & Analysis Team (GI-SAT), April 2011. Job:5035

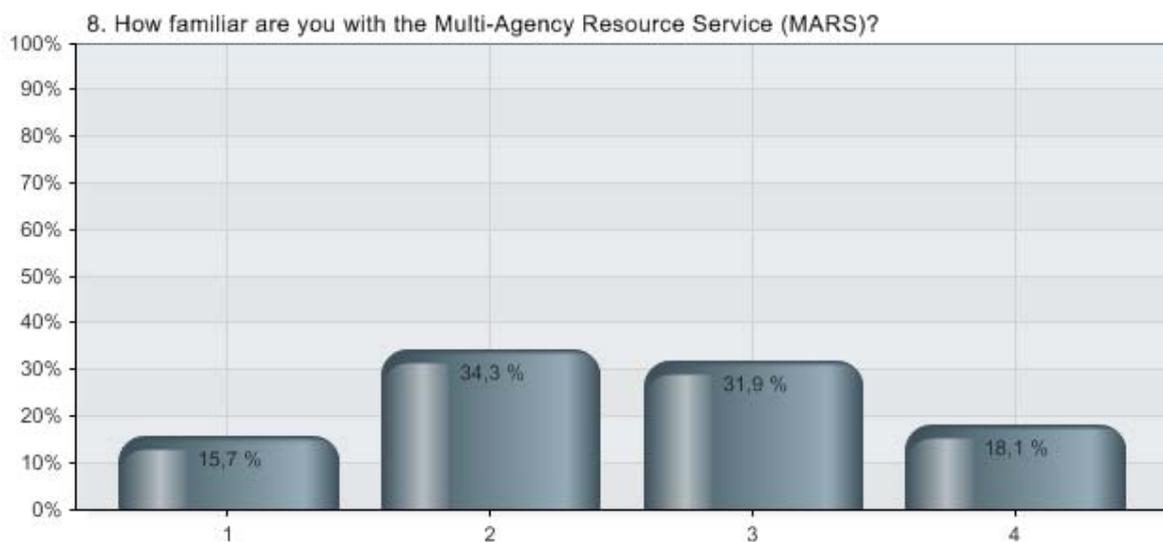


The MARS team note that they constantly use their networking and established links with other organisations to provide quality assured and robust advice to requests that come in.

*“Having the right connection in the right organisation is key – one of the requests that came through – we were able to link in with the Scottish Crime and Justice Research Centre, and they then used their networks and what we got back was really good quality information through peer reviewed journals...”*

#### 4.4 Effectiveness of Communication and Networking Activity

Based on information received from the web survey (note this survey was sent to all individuals on the MARS/SCCPN joint mailing list so people on this list are more likely to have heard of the MARS as compared to a random sample of practitioners), it would appear that the MARS is reaching a substantial number of people with 50% (n=166) stating they were either very familiar or quite familiar with the MARS, and a further 32% (n=106) being ‘vaguely familiar’



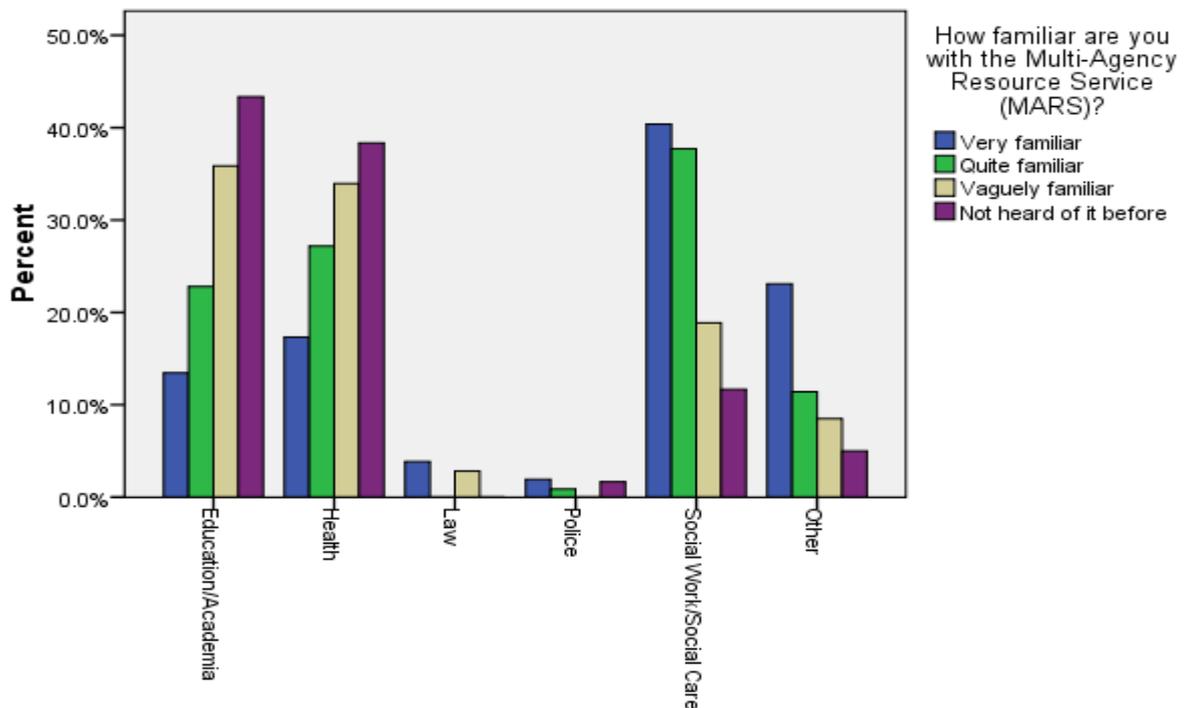
Alternatives	Percent	Value
1 Very familiar	15,7 %	52
2 Quite familiar	34,3 %	114
3 Vaguely familiar	31,9 %	106
4 Not heard of it before	18,1 %	60
Total		332

Further analysis of the familiarity of respondents with the MARS by: profession, membership of a CPC, and whether they have worked directly with children<sup>3</sup> are shown below.

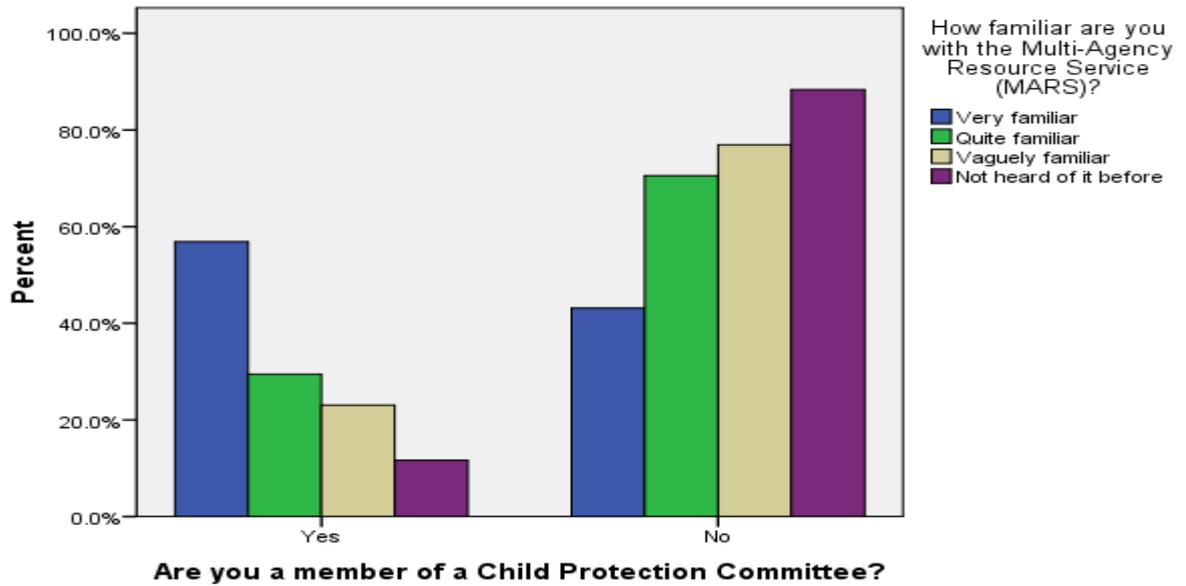
<sup>3</sup> Note, the question ‘Do you work directly with children and young people?’ was asked to all respondents. It does not however distinguish between those who are frontline practitioners in children’s services and those working in more managerial roles therefore it may be open to some interpretation.

- Respondents working in Social Work/Social Care professions are most likely to be 'very familiar' with the work of the MARS (40%, n=21), compared to those in health (17%, n=9) or education (14%, n=7)
- Unsurprisingly, members of CPCs are more likely to be 'very familiar' (57%, n=29) with the MARS compared to non-members (43%, n=22)
- Those working directly with children and young people are more likely to say they have 'never heard of the MARS' (78%, n=47) than those who do not work directly with children and young people (22%, n=13).

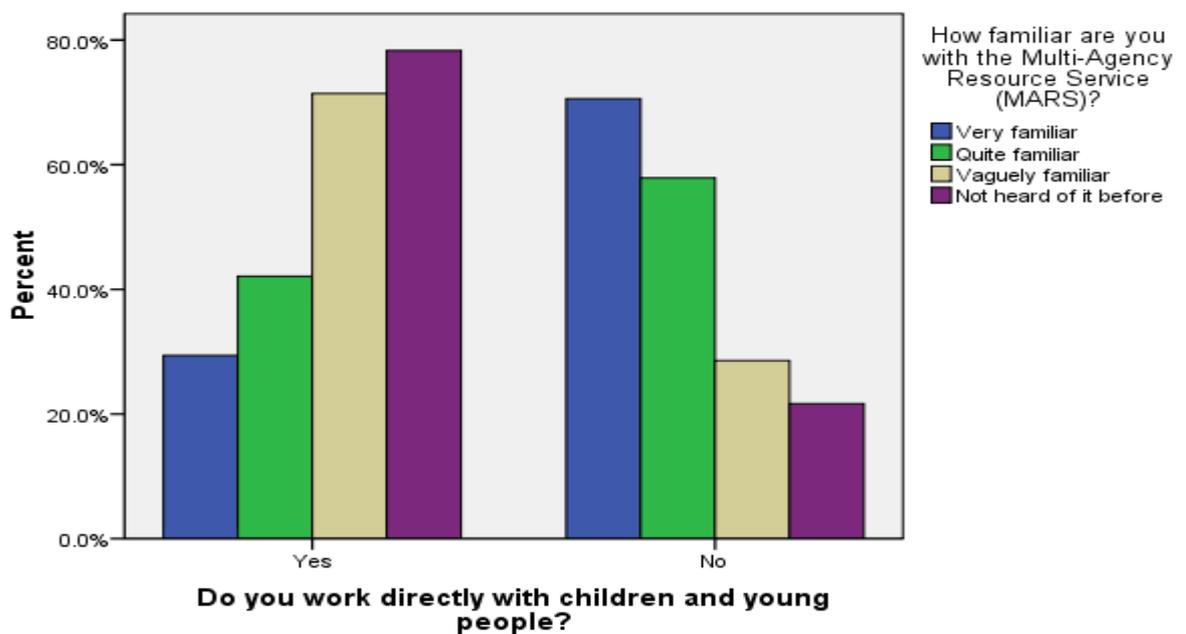
**Familiarity with the MARS by Profession**



### CPC by Familiarity with the MARS



### Work with Children by Familiarity with the MARS



When asked how respondents first found out about the MARS, the most common responses were:

- Word of mouth (n=63)
- Direct mailing/newsletter (n=63)
- Conference/seminar/event (n=55).

Several stakeholders suggested that there was a definite lack of awareness of the MARS within the health sector (although the health sector is currently represented on the MARS Steering Group and the MARS have presented at a number of health forums).

*“I’m not sure anyone in health would know what the MARS was or what it could do- it’s probably a great resource for Social Workers but I work in Health and I don’t really have a clue what it does or what it’s available for – and I imagine most people in health wouldn’t have a clue....”*

*“If I think of health professionals and the particular roles that are most concerned with child protection then health visitors and school nurses would become top of the list then child and adolescent mental health services, paediatricians obviously but they tend to work in settings where there is a designated paediatrician for child protection and everyone knows that. Some of the health professionals in the front line are often doing sole visits, often faced with situations they may be quite unsure what to do - creates a lot of anxiety in those situations and we maybe haven’t quite got to them..”*

#### **4.5 Overall Satisfaction**

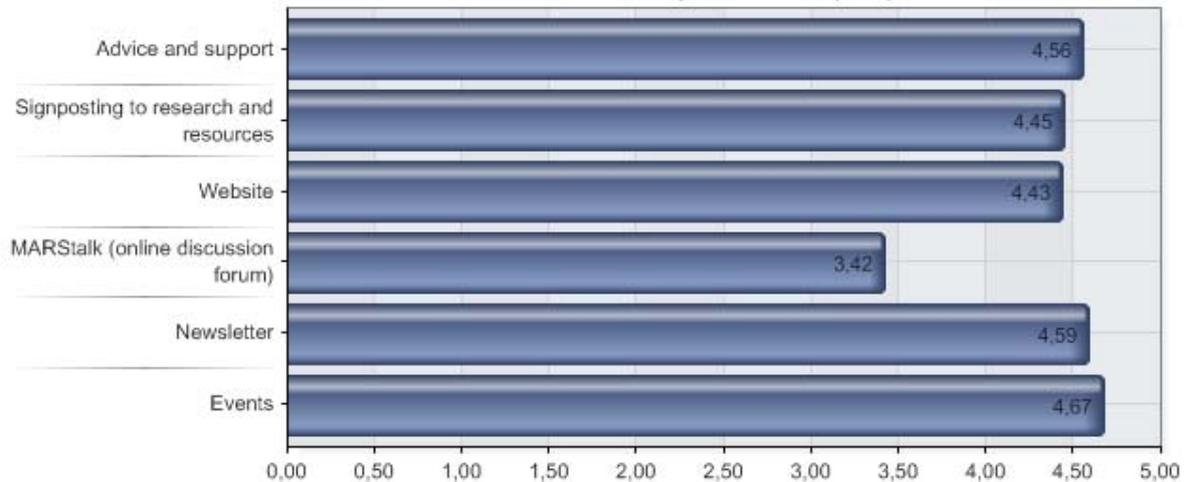
Feedback previously gathered by the MARS from users of the service has shown a general satisfaction with the advice or support given. Comments included:

*“The great advantage was the sounding board that MARS provided. One particular issue was complex and it was a great comfort to be able to discuss this with [member of team] who could provide perspective, support and reassurance. She helped us think through the issue and ensure that all areas were covered.”*

*“Very helpful, I needed an external expert eye cast over our draft child protection policy and the comments were very useful and incorporated into the document. I also got a response very speedily which was important to me...”*

Results from this web survey also show positive feedback towards each of the services provided by the MARS by the 35% of respondents who stated that they had accessed any of the MARS services (n=95) (Rated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is negative and 5 is positive):

11. Below are examples of what the MARS offers. If you have used any of them, how would you rate their quality?



*“We have child protection practitioners here who take an area each – we’re split into three local authorities – I’m quite an established practitioner – been in for years and MARS helps me more than they do. It’s the only way you can actually learn. There’s always lessons to be learned from past experience and see the thread going through it”.*

The majority of respondents who stated that they had never used any of the services provided by the MARS suggested this was because they had never had the need to (46%, n=81). 28% (n=50) stated they had not been previously aware of the services available and 31% (n=55) stated they used alternative sources of information, support or advice such as colleagues, team leaders or peers in the first instance.

Stakeholders suggested that the MARS had been ‘fairly successful’ bearing in mind the short space of time it had been in place and that it had coincided with a time that most managers and practitioners in child protection are overwhelmed with work. It was viewed as an ‘emerging’ and ‘evolving’ resource rather than a long-standing institution and noted that its activities to date had rightly focused on building its profile and user base, developing its website and the Communities of Expertise. Stakeholders suggested that their effectiveness will grow and develop through word of mouth and through more people volunteering to offer the advice and expertise required. There was a suggestion that the MARS was already perceived to a ‘credible’ resource and this credibility would continue to grow over time. The example of the MARS’ role in chairing the Significant Case Reviews SLWG was cited as a key example of MARS success and also contributed to raising its profile and credibility (see Chapter 5).

#### 4.6 Reasons for Using Website

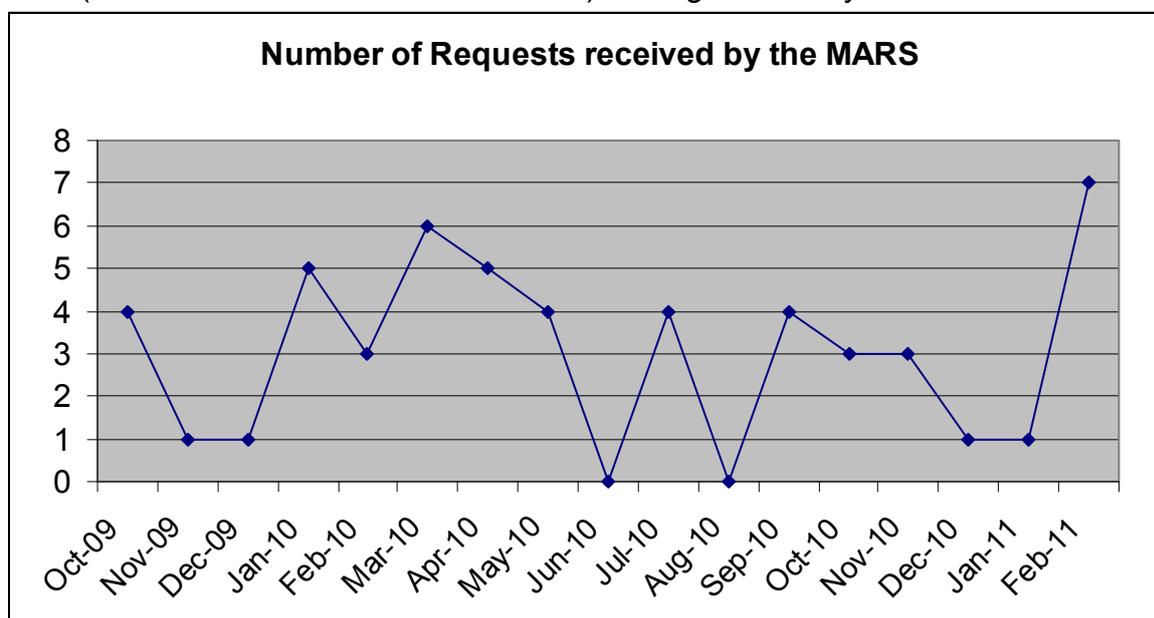
The majority of respondents, 89% (n=84) who stated they had previously contacted the MARS also stated they used the MARS website on one or two occasions (58%) or more often (31%).

The most common reasons for accessing the MARS website were:

- To keep up to date with developments in the child protection field (n=72)
- To source publications/research evidence (n=70)
- To find out about forthcoming events (n=52)
- To find out about the activities of CPCs (n=21)
- To access the online directory of organisations and initiatives (n=19).

#### 4.7 Impact

We could hypothesise that if the MARS' awareness raising activities were having an impact, we might expect to see a steady increase in the number of requests received for information or advice. However, as the chart below shows the requests received have been more sporadic in nature with a noticeable increase in activity in early 2010 (website was launched in Dec 2009) and again in early 2011.



An analysis of the 60 requests received by the MARS to date suggests that one third of requests received are for signposting to research evidence or other resources (n=21), with approximately one quarter of all requests received up to Feb 2011 (n=16) being for advice or direct support with a complex child protection case:

- Signposting to research evidence/good practice/policy documents (n=21)
- Advice/direct support for a complex case (n=16)
- Sourcing Training and Development resources (n=6)
- Requests for speakers/facilitators (n=5)
- Support developing policy and procedures (n=5)
- Support with Significant Case Reviews/Internal Reviews (n=4)
- Support to commission research (n=2)
- Request for specialist resource (n=1).

## **Part 2: Developing Communities of Expertise**

### **4.8 Aims and Objectives**

Part of the MARS remit from Recommendation 27 of the SWIA report was to develop and support Communities of Expertise on which any staff working with complex child protection issues could draw on for advice, expertise, training and research knowledge.

More specifically, the aims of the Community of Expertise (CoE) are to:

- Provide support and advice to individual organisations or to agencies involved in a specific case
- Help develop a sense of cohesion, and consistency of quality among practitioners who specialise in child protection
- Maximise the potential for creating a skilled workforce that can make a positive difference to the protection and welfare of children and young people
- Enhance the development of a confident and competent workforce.

The MARS team endeavoured to learn lessons from what were previously known as Communities of Practice and NHS Shared Space (closed website available to members only) and across other disciplines and sources such as National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA). One of the key lessons was the need for robust quality assurance of members as opposed to 'self-declared experts' which can bring particular risks.

It was always intended that there may be a continuum of support provided by the CoEs and the MARS team would be the first point of contact in determining the level or type of support required including:

- Contact with the MARS: this includes asking for advice, or signposting agencies to people or organisations who can offer the appropriate support
- Brokering arrangements: this includes brokering advice and support from one organisation which may amount to no more than one or two calls, an email exchange or a couple of meetings through to brokering intensive support for a period of time such as participating on significant case reviews
- Advice and support: this includes the MARS team visiting the organisation as often as necessary for the circumstances or complexity of the case.

Stakeholders viewed a key function of the CoEs as sharing and developing expertise and making better use of collective learning when dealing with complex cases to ensure a consistency of approach. Part of this involves acting as a 'touchstone' for others to check out their own approach, 'like a critical friend providing some positive support'. Other stakeholders saw the CoE's primary function as a support role for the MARS team to run things past and generate new ideas.

### **4.9 Representation on the CoE**

It was envisaged that the CoEs would include representation from a range of child protection professionals. As of February 2011 there were 12 members of the

Community of Expertise. These members cover a range of professions including Child Protection Committees, health, SCRA, police, education and social work. There was still a perception among stakeholders however that it was more social work biased and there needed to be stronger representation from the police and health.

The MARS team felt that 12 was the optimum number for a single CoE to function well although acknowledged that they would like to increase this number by developing further CoEs. A number of new applications are currently going through the admissions process. One stakeholder noted the difficulty in ensuring a balance between having enough multi-agency representation but also that there are not too many people involved as then members will not have the opportunity to develop their own expertise.

Stakeholders highlighted the difficulty in ensuring a good geographical spread of members due to travel/financial constraints but stressed the importance of having the smaller local authorities engaged and involved. It was suggested this may involve looking at more imaginative ways of communication while acknowledging that the internet does not always suit everyone. It was also suggested by stakeholders that there may be a role for Central Government or senior executive in local authorities, health, social work departments, and police forces to issue a reminder that we need people to get involved for the good of everyone. The National CPC Coordinator also saw it as part of her role to explain and persuade professionals to use and become members of the CoEs.

The MARS team recognise the challenge ahead in terms of the diminishing resources within local authorities and are considering whether more creative means of recruiting members are required. They deliberated as to whether a shared service carrying out activities on behalf of a whole group of people (which would take longer for them to do themselves) was more or less beneficial than doing things in partnership, sourcing and bringing in expertise to do a piece of work that leaves the local team free to concentrate on their own work.

Interestingly, 49% (n=41) of respondents in the web survey who stated that they had previously accessed the MARS, also stated they would be interested in joining a Community of Expertise. For those who stated they would not be interested in joining, the most common reasons given were:

- I don't have the time to commit (n=21)
- I don't have the right experience, knowledge or skills to offer (n=11)
- I am already a member of a different network in my own local area (n=7).

#### **4.10 Becoming a Member**

For professionals to become members of the CoE there is a process detailed on the MARS website which includes a submission form and details of reference checks. There are also plans to include information on existing members of the CoE on the website. Some stakeholders have suggested that the process may be off-putting to some people who are already overwhelmed with paperwork and this in turn has resulted in fewer people applying to become members.

*“I would imagine there are quite a number of people who have an application form sitting on their desk and just haven't bothered and I think that's caused the development of the Communities to be slower than MARS and the rest of the Scottish child protection community would have wanted but I don't think it's their fault - it's just a matter of time and confidence being built up in people”*

Existing members of the CoE suggested that the process for joining was 'straightforward' and that there has to be a level of credibility attached to members, particularly in child protection and that this reference checking process should be maintained. It was suggested that previously local authorities would very often bring in consultants to help with complex cases of work but they were never sure exactly what their credentials were so the process for quality-assuring members of the CoE needed to be robust.

Members also suggested that there are a number of personal benefits to joining the CoE including meeting other people, sharing ideas, learning what was happening across Scotland and supporting your own processes, eg developing training programmes and work around Significant Case Reviews. The MARS team suggested that the personal capabilities of a member are almost equally as important as their professional capabilities as they are not going in and just telling but also helping, supporting and listening but also challenging or being critical in the best sense.

There was some concern about the term 'Community of Expertise' in that members do not consider themselves 'experts' but rather they have some experience in a certain area of child protection. This has been acknowledged by the team at the MARS and discussions are ongoing to find a more suitable name with the overarching aim of *“recognising that everyone has something to offer in terms of helping each other out”*.

It was also highlighted that some members of the CoE are self-employed and have registered to become a member as they have the availability and no conflict of interest to take on paid work, while others have full time employment in the public sector. While all members have the knowledge and experience base necessary, there needs to be clarification of what circumstances payment is exchanged or advice/support is given 'in kind'.

#### **4.11 Memorandum of Understanding**

Some concerns were raised during the 'setting-up' period of the MARS as to liability and status of the advice given to any organisation, for example what happens to the status of the advice if the circumstances of the child or family change, or if advice is given and something subsequently goes wrong with the case, will that advice or individual be challenged? As a result a Memorandum of Understanding was developed which, although not a legally binding document, sets out the principles and terms of agreement between two parties. The essence of this agreement relies on the integrity of all parties involved.

The process for establishing the MoU between parties is led by the MARS team and may involve the following steps:

1. discussions with the requesting organisation to identify the facts of the case, needs of the situation and possible ways forward
2. identify possible opportunities or individuals/partners to approach
3. opportunities for support or partnership to be sourced by the MARS
4. develop terms of reference for working together including objectives, clarifying expectations of all parties and setting out timescales
5. finalise and 'sign-off' MoU.

One member of the CoE highlighted the benefits of having an independent third party such as the MARS brokering arrangements:

*"I found it helpful to have MARS acting as almost the negotiating body to check me out if I was the right person and then back with the organisation concerned and then to have a planning meeting at the end which the memorandum was signed off – I found that felt safer for everybody."*

It was also suggested that it may be useful for their to be a further stage built into the MoU whereby the organisation is re-contacted at a later date to check whether any further work or support is needed.

#### **4.12 Effectiveness**

There was general support from stakeholders of the principals and continued need for a Community of Expertise while recognising it was still in its early stages of development and use had been relatively limited to date. Similarly, it was acknowledged by several stakeholders that it had not 'taken off' in a way that was originally envisaged by them, which may be due to a lack of volunteers becoming members or a lack of awareness of the service or less need that was originally anticipated. There was also a reflection on the size of the CoE compared to the area it is covering and the complexity of the issues involved and the need to be realistic in terms of what it can achieve. One stakeholder from a larger local authority suggested although their CPC was largely self-resilient, there can be specific pieces of work that they do not have knowledge on e.g. training resources or research evidence and on this they would need some support.

Members of the CoE suggested they had initially expected to be more involved than they have been (while also noting that the level of work involved was just right when trying to balance it with an already busy day job). It was also made clear to members at the outset that the degree of involvement in the CoE would be for them to decide in collaboration with their own agency, which was welcomed.

Examples of the type of requests that members have been involved with include acting as a sounding board for when agencies have tried to progress things and come across a particular blockage so are looking for alternative solutions:

*"sometimes it's just about saying well you've done all that's possible around this...it's just been where people have lifted the phone and just tested something out".*

Other stakeholders suggested a greater need for more information around what the Community of Expertise can offer, with case studies as examples to show people how it can be used.

Twenty respondents from the web survey stated that they had contacted the MARS directly (or through a representative) for case-specific advice or support (either by telephone or email). The most common reasons given were:

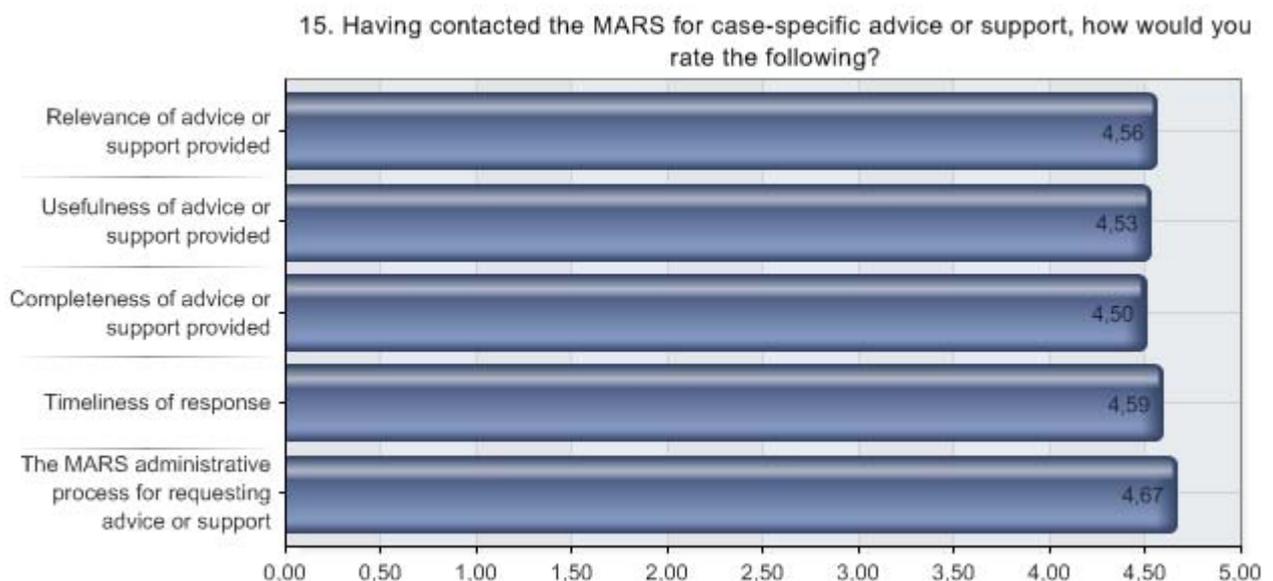
- I needed to access expertise in a specific subject area which was not available within my local area (n=10)
- The MARS was one of several sources of information and advice which I accessed for this particular query (n=9).

### 4.13 Feedback

As discussed in 'Measures of Success', the MARS team has set up regular meetings with members of CoE which includes discussing feedback and sharing ideas. One member of the CoE suggested that the dates for these meetings need to be set and secured well in advance as diaries can get very busy. The meetings themselves were seen as very useful and enjoyable networking events.

There is also a standard feedback form sent out to anyone who has requested information or advice from the MARS. If more direct, intensive support is needed from a CoE then feedback would be obtained through a face to face interview with all agencies involved. One member of the CoE suggested that the feedback element was extremely important to all involved, and had not always been received in the past. On a personal level it can help with continued personal development. Another member suggested that she was not aware whether the MARS had collected feedback on the specific case or not.

Feedback from the web survey from the 20 respondents who had contacted the MARS directly was positive on all aspects.



#### 4.14 Impact

There are obvious difficulties in attributing positive changes to practice solely to the advice or support of the MARS. The MARS may provide useful and well-received advice and tools to promote practice change, however ultimately changes in practice are the responsibility of the practitioner and/or their organisation. This review has not included any in-depth case studies examining the impact of any particular advice or support received through the MARS for service users. As mentioned above, evidence of the impact of this support may only truly be shown over a much longer period of time.

However, the 20 web survey respondents who did receive direct support or information through the MARS were asked what difference this made to themselves or their service. The most common responses were:

- It provided clarity to our decision-making process (n=10)
- It streamlined the process for dealing with a particular case (n=4)
- It made no real difference (n=3).

When all respondents who were familiar with the MARS were asked whether they would use the service (again) in the future, 96% stated either yes (47%) or maybe, if necessary (49%).

One respondent who had received face to face support through a member of the CoE stated that this support resulted in being able to produce best practice papers and briefings which would have an ongoing impact in the future and was likely to impact on other sports, voluntary and government organisations as well. Another stated that as a result of her direct support, the commissioning organisation had revised and strengthened their current practice.

One CPC member stated they had applied for support through the MARS for help with a Significant Case Review, by way of having an independent 'critical friend' to ensure a good standard of review with SMART recommendations regarding learning. They suggested this was likely to impact on the learning for all partner agencies.

## **CHAPTER 5: Short Term Outcome 2 - Improve and Develop the Knowledge, Skills and Expertise of Child Protection Professionals**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the work the MARS has done to improve and develop the knowledge, skills and expertise of child protection professionals. This includes the establishment of short life working groups, cross-cutting analytical work, and informing training and development needs.

The evidence presented in this section comes from interviews with key stakeholders including the MARS team, the National CPC Coordinator and the Head of Child Protection Policy at the Scottish Government.

### **5.2 Short Life Working Groups (SLWG)**

Over the past year the MARS has become increasingly involved in addressing more systemic gaps in child protection knowledge on an ad-hoc basis where a national issue has been identified. A primary example of this is the work on Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) in which the MARS team were commissioned to convene a Short Life Working Group with relevant 'expertise' to suggest some potential solutions to a series of questions. This SLWG was chaired by the Director of the MARS and included significant discussion and consultation work, a review of current literature and guidance, consideration of models for undertaking SCRs, a survey of CPCs, consultation with chairs of CPCs and feedback on the views of practice. The SLWG reported with a number of recommendations to which the Scottish Government has published an official response and against which action will be taken.

This work on Significant Case Reviews was cited by several stakeholders as one of the most effective and successful of the MARS activities.

*"They've done quite a few Short Life Working Groups to contribute to wider documents - that's important and they've drawn on different people – it's a really good use of time".*

*"The work they've done in relation to Significant Case Reviews has been very useful and we have used the info that has been collated through that work stream to inform our own Significant Case Reviews".*

*"As they have become more widely known they have been able to influence more like leading on the Significant Case Review stuff - that has been really helpful"*

The MARS team themselves saw their ability to convene the SLWG and harness the appropriate skills and expertise within a relatively short timescale as one of their own key successes. In terms of their future role in relation to Significant Case Reviews, many stakeholders saw the MARS as having a pivotal part to play in centrally collating the reviews with the benefit of them being 'multi-agency' and having neutrality in terms of being separate from the 'scrutiny' aspect of the reviews.

### 5.3 Ad-hoc Analytical Work

Another means of the MARS contributing to improving the knowledge, skills and expertise of child protection professionals is through their ad-hoc analytical work such as the scoping study conducted in respect of Adult Support and Protection Communities. This was a short project commissioned by the Scottish Government in April 2010 which has now been concluded and presented to the Adult Protection Committee Conveners and resulted in an additional request for a further multi-agency scoping study as well as a draft job description for a new Adult Protection Coordinator Post. This was considered to be a useful and worthwhile exercise by the MARS team who saw it as increasing their own knowledge base, strengthening the links between Child Protection and Adult Protection and expanding their network but also as a useful source of additional resources (£200K) to improve sustainability prospects.

The National CPC Coordinator role also brings in a range of cross-cutting analytical work which ties in with both the MARS and wider national agenda. For example, the Coordinator described her involvement with a pilot project involving adult survivors of sexual abuse.

*“The fact is that the child protection system doesn’t take any of its learning from adult survivors who have been through all the systems – there’s no link at a government level between adult and child protection committees and I want to close that gap. In the wider agenda that fits in with work MARS is currently doing on adult protection and also fits in with the needs of CPCs.”*

### 5.4 Training and Development

As stated in Chapter 1, two of the original key functions of the MARS was to:

- Identify gaps in service provision or training needs to inform local and national policy developments
- To contribute to the development and promotion of national strategic training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework.

It was also acknowledged that these functions may need to be reprioritised to make time for the more pressing functions of raising awareness and developing the Communities of Expertise. As the MARS team themselves highlighted:

*“Our plan is predicated on the fact that we’ve had three years funding and we know that not everything could be done in year one. We made a decision early on that we would become operational even without having everything in place so we were taking requests and still developing backroom processes but it was felt that we could do that in an iterative way. We’ve tried to be responsive to people and we do reflect and take on feedback and adapt our systems accordingly. The objective around training and developing a national framework ...we always knew that was a longer term objective”.*

The establishment of the National CPC Coordinator role is one such way in which the development of training and CPD will be taken forward, through her involvement

with the National Training Coordinators Group and regular contact with lead officers and training co-ordinators. The National CPC Coordinator also described an ongoing pilot project focusing on how practitioners who have been through specialist child protection training currently access the MARS resources and how these can best be developed to help with the continuous learning process.

Several stakeholders recognised the importance of having the MARS available to identify suitable training resources and deliver competent training and a number of requests already received have related to sourcing suitable training materials or facilitators.

## **5.5 The National Training Framework**

The Scottish Government's revised National Guidance for Child Protection refers to the importance of child protection training on a single and multi-agency basis to ensure that a holistic approach is being taken to meet the needs of children.

The thinking for a training framework initially emerged from the Child Protection Strategic Training Group (CPSTG), a multi-disciplinary reference group overseen by the then Social Work Inspectorate. Subsequently, the MARS, together with SCCPN, was instrumental in bringing together key officials and stakeholders in January 2010 to discuss a national framework for child protection training. The MARS and SCCPN produced a discussion paper on possible options for taking this work forward. The paper has recently been used to inform the Scottish Government Child Protection Teams thinking for a training framework.

A working group has been recently set up that will lead on this work and the MARS has representation on this group through the National CPC Coordinator and the SCCPN. It is too early to envisage what the MARS' role will be once this work has been completed, however, it would be fair to say that there will be expectation that the MARS plays an active part in the implementation of the framework and the MARS has indicated its willingness to take forward or facilitate specific initiatives that come from this working group.

## **5.6 Impact**

As set out in Chapter 3, the MARS has set out various measures of success in relation to improving and developing the knowledge, skills and expertise of child protection professionals. It will be a subject for future evaluations as to whether these particular functions have had an impact on frontline practitioners further down the line. In terms of whether the MARS has had an impact on influencing national policy – see Chapter 9.

## **CHAPTER 6: What is the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)?**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of the SCCPN, including information on aims and objectives, the role of the Coordinator and Working Groups, key stakeholders, target groups, activities and outcomes, measures of success, staffing and funding arrangements. It therefore provides an important context for the review of the SCCPN.

Data comes from the documentary analysis, interviews with the SCCPN Coordinator, Chair of the main advisory group and other key stakeholders.

### **6.2 Vision, Aims and Objectives**

As stated above, the SCCPN was first established in 2006 as an informal network of academics and key stakeholders in child care and protection. This grew over time into a more formal network with three different strands focusing on dissemination, evaluation and research generation. In parallel to this the SCCPN also had representation on the Recommendation 27 working group and there was recognition that this network could play a pivotal role in making sure that child protection professionals had access to the research evidence that was needed, working in collaboration with the MARS. Funding was therefore received for a Coordinator to be put in place to take forward these three strands with a more strategic and focused approach, and to increase research and dissemination activities.

The vision of the network is that the developmental needs of all children are met, whatever the level of parental capacity and socio-economic status. Its aim is to provide a measured overview of available national and international evidence from research and practice and promote the generation of new evidence to fill gaps in knowledge about how best to support children.

More specifically, the aims of the SCCPN as set out in their original funding proposal are to:

- Foster collaboration and coordination in generating evidence for practice, in order to increase the relevance and utility of the evidence base and to maximise the use of resources in the conduct and dissemination of findings from research and evaluation
- Facilitate access to and use of evidence for practice by ensuring that the way in which findings from research and evaluation are disseminated takes account of practitioners' needs
- To contribute to better outcomes for children and young people by fostering collaboration in the generation of evidence and in promoting use of that evidence.

For stakeholders, they saw the main focus of the network as about trying to make research on child protection both relevant and known by people in the field and to provide a network and hub of people around knowledge exchange/transfer and

practice wisdom. It was also about trying to encourage people to exchange information and disseminate research in an accessible format. In terms of whether it had met its objectives, most felt that it had achieved what it set out to do. Others highlighted that there is always more that can be done.

*“Overall, in terms of what SCCPN has set out to do in terms of knowledge dissemination and augmentation I think it has at least partially achieved what it set out to do and I would at least support the values and the aims of it”.*

### **6.3 The SCCPN Advisory Group**

The SCCPN advisory group meets twice a year and currently consists of representation from the Scottish Government, the voluntary sector, NHS Education Scotland, ACPOS, CPCs, ADSW, the MARS, academia, University of Edinburgh/NSPCC Centre for Learning in Child Protection (CLiCP) and ADES.

The agreed purpose of the group is to:

- Advise on the strategic development of the SCCPN to help ensure that it reflects the needs of key stakeholder groups
- Advise on the development of the Coordinator role for the SCCPN to help ensure that it best facilitates the delivery of the strategic plan
- Promote the sharing of information and understanding between agencies, bodies and stakeholders on the role and activities of the SCCPN to support the network and Coordinator in the implementation of plans
- Monitor the delivery of the key commitments outlined in the funding proposal/contract.

### **6.4 Working Groups**

Prior to the funding period, the SCCPN established three smaller working groups to take forward its activities on research, evaluation and dissemination (a hub and spoke model). The objectives of these three strands of the network are as follows:

#### **Research**

- To identify priorities for research by taking account of where gaps exist and of the needs for evidence in practice
- To promote a national agenda for research in child care and protection so that research is more efficient, cost-effective and better able to inform practice and policy
- To achieve funding for members of the network to conduct primary and secondary research by demonstrating a) strong research partnerships b) a clear need for the research and c) strategies for ensuring the research will be actively disseminated to those working in practice.

It was suggested that the research working group has been the most effective of the three strands in that they have been the most active and have achieved a significant amount of successful funding bids and research generation. This group were thought to have benefited in particular from having the Coordinator in place which has

allowed them to focus on developing ideas and proposals rather than the preparation and finding work required.

### ***Evaluation***

- To map evaluation of child care and protection practice in all local authorities, health boards and constabularies
- To collate information (reports, tools, contacts, etc) that can be shared to reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiency in use of resources
- To promote the sharing of knowledge (tools, approaches, experiences, etc) that will reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiency in use of resources
- To promote collaboration in the conduct of practice evaluation by identifying such opportunities and fostering connections
- To promote the pooling of resources within or between local authorities and health boards by identifying opportunities and fostering connections.

The evaluation working group became less active over time, partly, it was suggested, because of work commitments by members and partly because of the complex nature of evaluation and the need to take a step back and coordinate activities with other organisations to ensure everyone is working to agreed parameters across disciplines. It was also suggested that the initial scoping work that the group were conducting on looking at different models of self-evaluation including measures of cost-effectiveness and understanding what processes CPCs were currently adopting became redundant after the inspection process took over which included an inspection model that was to be adopted across Scotland.

Stakeholders suggested that whereas membership of the research working group was a 'good fit' with people's current jobs, the evaluation work was more of 'an add-on' and perhaps needed more direction than had been given by the Advisory Group.

The evaluation strand has now been subsumed within the research working group although it was stressed that support for effective self-evaluation tools that practitioners could use to review their own learning are still needed and this should continue to be a priority for the SCCPN.

### ***Dissemination***

- To develop a 'brand' identity for the SCCPN
- To develop a website that will support the activities of the three strands of work (including space to bank research studies, evaluation tools and publications originating within the network)
- To develop a range of formats for disseminating research findings (including templates for research reports, research summaries, slides for presentations)
- To plan three dissemination events in each year of the three year funding period, including an international conference in the final year
- To secure funding for further events and dissemination activities in partnership with the research and evaluation working groups.

The dissemination working group was a small group to start with and was thought to have benefited substantially from the part-time Events and Communications Manager who was put in place to help with the event organisation aspect. However it

was acknowledged that the dissemination activity was being taken on more so by the Coordinator role and meetings of the group has become more 'patchy' over time. There was some uncertainty expressed as to whether it still existed or not and whether it was still necessary.

*"I don't know if it's still necessary – the current seminar series is exactly what the dissemination group would have been doing so from that point of view I can hardly think a dissemination group is necessary but maybe if the funding for that type of activity didn't exist anymore then we'd have to be more creative about how we did it."*

## **6.5 Membership of the Working Groups**

Membership of each of the working groups has included (current and past members) representation from Stirling, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee Universities, the Voluntary Sector (Children 1<sup>st</sup> and Quarriers), CLiCP, NHS and the MARS.

Several stakeholders commented on the increasing tension of having to rely on the willingness of universities to support academics unpaid time to give to the SCCPN while at the same time acknowledging that there was no other realistic alternative eg to make support compulsory or for CPCs to allow people to contribute via protected time. Others noted the potential tension between institutions in bringing in research money yet working as collaboratively as possible to contribute to the network. On the flip side, it was suggested that a lot of work within academia is done out of 'good will' and there is a wider benefit for everyone by way of promoting research and education.

One stakeholder questioned how membership of the groups had been selected and noted a perception that these were closed now and were not inclusive enough of other academic institutions. They highlighted the importance of openness and transparency to ensure there is continued interest or people will start to use other networks. It should be noted that at the outset, an open call for membership of the working groups went out via the SCCPN mailing list, in addition to following up with individuals who had expressed an interest in taking an active part in the network. Anyone who came forward joined a group. The SCCPN team highlighted that membership remains open and suggested that the success of the network depends upon active members.

## **6.6 The SCCPN Coordinator**

A Coordinator role was also set up to take forward and extend the activities of the SCCPN so that it can operate as a 'clearing house' for research evidence, support the activities of the three working groups and work in close collaboration with the MARS. The objectives originally set out for the Coordinator were to facilitate:

- dissemination of policy and practice messages from existing national and international research evidence
- analysis and dissemination of common themes from significant case reviews, child protection inquiries and HMIE joint inspection reports in the context of the research evidence base
- a coordinated approach to the evaluation of practice and policy developments

- establishment of research partnerships to obtain funding to undertake new national and international research.

The original intention was for the role of Coordinator to be a facilitative one, however it has evolved over time into much more of a 'hands-on' role with the current post-holder having direct involvement in both research and dissemination activities. It was agreed within the wider advisory group that the focus of the Coordinator's time for the remainder of the current funding period (ends July 2011, post extended to May 2012) should be on developing signposting to existing research resources and organising and delivering a programme of interactive face to face, practice focused research dissemination events.

## 6.7 Impact of the Coordinator Role

There was overwhelming support for the role of the Coordinator by stakeholders and most held the view that the network would cease to exist if this role was not continued in the future. This was partly due to the essential need for someone to take on the coordination of research funding bids and dissemination activities but also due to the particular skills and expertise of the current job holder who was felt to bring significant 'added value' to the post.

*"There's something about having the right person there with the right skills, knowledge and capacity to manage a sprawling, unfocused and complex set of stakeholders from the academic pot in the field, and the many demands of individuals...It's a complex and a challenging role but when done well - and it has been done well - it makes an enormous difference to what we can be galvanised into doing."*

Stakeholders highlighted the potential difficulties for academics who contribute to the activities of the network which can lead to a lot of pressure for them in trying to combine their own day job, be part of different groups and networks and also conduct their own research. Therefore, having a Coordinator in place who can spot research opportunities, identify effective collaborations, and start the application process is highly valued.

*"What made a difference really was having the co-ordinator.... We could continue to do our collaborations but it's really vital to have someone who people can go to as the first link but can also provide some infrastructure and support so it enabled us to give our contribution in kind but in a much more structured way - I wouldn't have time to search out opportunities for funding...to have that level of support really makes a difference in terms of being able to do the wider range of activities. Producing a newsletter or maintaining a website, organising and booking places are much harder to maintain."*

*"She's the cog in the wheel that keeps people going".*

*"Sometimes I see the SCCPN as [the Coordinator] – she is known throughout the academic world, really responsive, encouraging of people to submit, give info, good at linking people in with each other. She was aware of things happening elsewhere, assisted networking. And yes – holding that hub together."*

There was however also recognition of the difficulties in where the priorities of the Coordinator post should be aligned to with the potentially competing demands and expectations of academia, central Government and CPCs.

## **6.8 Membership of the Network**

The network is a collaborative network of academics and key stakeholders and is open to anyone who has an interest in child care and protection in Scotland. Its membership has expanded significantly from around 25 members on set up to over 1000 members (as of May 2011). Some of these members represent organisations and connect into other networks. It includes those working in education, police,

Social services and health as well as representation from voluntary organisations. At its most basic level, 'joining' the Network involves simply being added to the SCCPN/MARS e-newsletter mailing list, which is distributed roughly every month. However, beyond this, being a member of the Network has given members access to a wide range of publications, resources, information and opportunities through meetings and events to learn more and share knowledge within the field.

Over time there has been an increasing number of researchers who have sought out the network which suggests that they want to become more actively involved. The mutual benefit for them is that there is an expectation that their research will be disseminated so the SCCPN is providing them with a framework to achieve that, for example research can be listed in the newsletter or website.

There was a perception however that attendance at events seems to be predominantly social workers and there were questions raised over whether health, for example, was adequately represented. (See Chapter 7 for further analysis). CPCs were considered to be key stakeholders in terms of getting information to the frontline although it was also noted that this cascading of information could be quite variable between local areas. Overall, it was suggested that more could and should be done to target practitioners.

*"It's based on a model of responding to the demands of individual practitioners - the problems come in terms of raising awareness of the network, there's been issues about the channels that they are actually able to reach and whether they are able to engage directly with practitioners which is the same problem as MARS in that individual practitioners are so difficult to engage with because they are so widespread and diverse. Engagement tends to take place at a more senior, strategic level."*

Currently the network does not specifically target service users or carers as there was a realisation that this requires significant time and resources so that this was not done in a 'tokenistic' way. It was suggested however, that it was also important to promote mindfulness of service user perspectives by raising awareness of participative research reporting their views and experiences.

## 6.9 The SCCPN Activities

The SCCPN objectives and activities are set out within their strategic documents. The opportunities for funding, joint activities, events and also the increasing convergence with the MARS means that there has to be a degree of flexibility. Any new or revised activities would however, be agreed by the wider advisory group. The table below shows how these activities link to the wider SCCPN objectives. Each of these activities and what is known about their reach, effectiveness and impact will be described in greater detail in the following chapters.

Objective	Activity
Increase access to and use of evidence for practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposting to existing resources</li> <li>• Networking/collaborations including developing international links</li> <li>• Developing website/newsletter/e-bulletin</li> <li>• Dissemination activity (attending, organising, presenting, facilitating events)</li> <li>• Responding to individual ad-hoc requests</li> </ul>
Increase the relevance, utility and strength of the evidence base in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary research activity including reviews of existing evidence, producing briefing papers)</li> <li>• Conducting primary research to identify and fill gaps (eg survey of practitioners' needs)</li> <li>• Developing and brokering collaborative bids</li> </ul>
Long-term funding and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to the sustainability sub-group of the MARS and SCCPN</li> </ul>

As with the MARS, the logic model set out in Chapter 3, helps clarify the links between the SCCPN's main activities and intended outcomes. In order to assess the effectiveness of the SCCPN's activities to date, the following chapters explore in more detail the perceived effectiveness by stakeholders and also the more tangible outcomes such as awareness of the SCCPN 'brand', number of hits on the website and attendance at events, etc. Whether these activities have or will ultimately impact on the lives of vulnerable children is clearly a matter for a significantly longer-term and more in-depth review.

The following Chapters 7 and 8 therefore explore the effectiveness of the SCCPN's short-term outcomes (3 and 4) as set out in the logic model which are:

- To increase access to and use of research evidence in practice
- Increase the relevance, utility and strength of the evidence base in practice.

Whether the SCCPN is thought to have influenced national policy is reported in Chapter 9.

## **6.10 Measuring Success**

Success has been measured against the objectives set out above on a regular basis through update papers and progress reports to the Advisory Group prepared by the Coordinator. It was suggested that if any activities were not considered achievable then the group would decide amongst themselves how to do things in a different way. Feedback is also requested from all attendees at events organised by the SCCPN and collated accordingly.

There is currently no formal reporting mechanism in place to feed back to the Scottish Government (current funder) on activities and success/failures although a representative from the Scottish Government sits on the main advisory group.

## **6.11 How Does the SCCPN Differ from Research Centres?**

It was suggested that the SCCPN could be viewed as less of a research centre and more of a conduit for the communication of research findings which may emerge from elsewhere. In theory, the network is not bound by any institutions so therefore it can promote effective partnerships and collaborations with people with the most relevant expertise in an area of interest. In practice, however, it was suggested that there may be somewhat of a tension between the role of the network in facilitating exchanges between researchers and the value that the hosting University may place on the network in terms of raising their own research profile and generating research funding.

The SCCPN places a significant focus on active dissemination which, perhaps, other traditional research centres do not necessarily have as much time for.

## **6.12 Staffing**

The SCCPN currently has two paid members of staff:

- One full-time Coordinator (Fiona Mitchell) funded for three years (August 2008-August 2011)
- One part-time (0.2) Events and Communications Manager (Lianne Smith) funded for 12 months from August 2010.

Line management is provided by the Professor of Social Work, Brigid Daniel, Department of Applied Social Sciences, University of Stirling who also chairs the advisory group. Professor Daniel's contribution is not funded.

The Events and Communications Manager was put in post to take a lead role in the planning and delivery of dissemination events and communications to support the development of the SCCPN, and increase the opportunities for knowledge exchange regarding the use of research evidence in practice. The current post-holder brought

a background in PR and media skills and subsequently delivered a media handling training course to both the MARS and SCCPN staff.

### **6.13 Sustainability/Funding**

Funding for the SCCPN comes mainly from the Scottish Government through a block grant of £199,485 to cover the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2011 (now extended to May 2012 through funding from Stirling University). There is however, additional funding received through the SCCPN's research and dissemination activities, including:

- £36,637 research funding has been generated to support the development of a proposal for national longitudinal research
- £25,000 funding has been generated to support the inception of a data-mapping and linkage project
- £38,850 additional revenue has been generated that has enabled the production of a series of briefings and a programme of seminars that address the evidence requirements of practitioners.

## **CHAPTER 7: Short Term Outcome 3 - Increase Access to and Use of Research Evidence in Practice**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a description of how the SCCPN has contributed to increasing access to and use of research evidence for child protection practitioners. This includes awareness raising activities, signposting to existing research via the website, networking and dissemination activities.

The evidence presented in this section comes from interviews with key stakeholders, an analysis of key documents and statistics provided by the SCCPN, the web survey and interviews with practitioners.

### **7.2 Awareness Raising Activities**

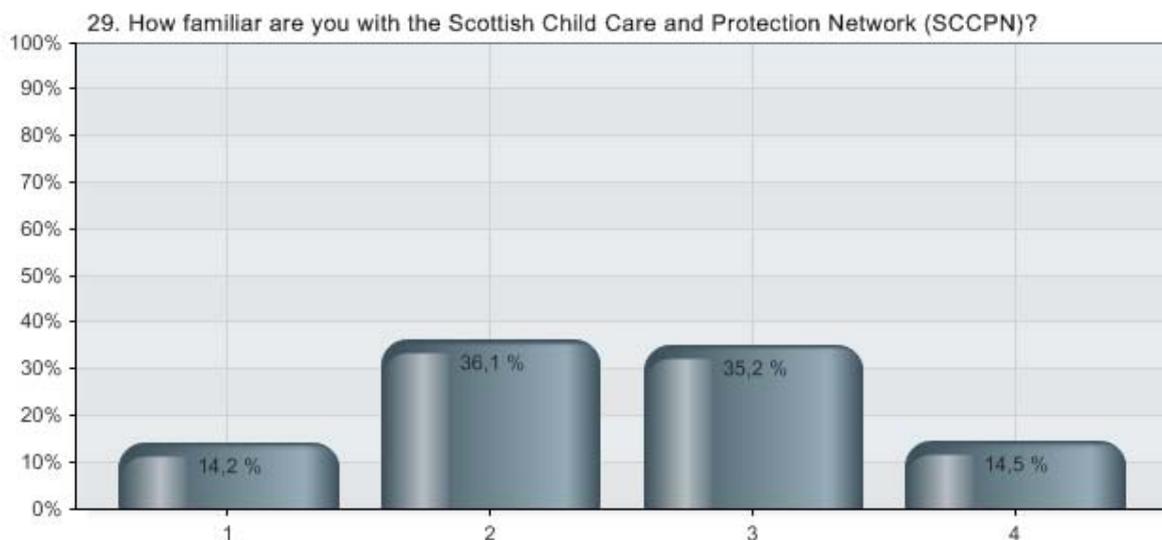
As with the MARS, the SCCPN Coordinator has been involved in various communication activities to date, including:

- Producing and distributing a regular newsletter/information alert and maintaining an electronic mailing list of over 1000 members
- Contributing to the 2011 annual conferences (in conjunction with CLiCP and the MARS) focusing on Significant Case Reviews with 88 attendees from a range of professions including health, education, police, social work, CPCs, training and development, the voluntary sector, adult protection and others.
- Presented/facilitated at 26 non-SCCPN organised events across Scotland with an estimated reach of approximately 1300 attendees from across the child protection community.
- Organised a seminar series on contemporary issues in child care and protection (fully booked) with attendance from 158 child protection professionals overall from a range of professions. A further six have been planned for May/June 2011 in Perth and Stirling.
- Representation of the SCCPN on national working groups eg Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews.
- Developing and maintaining a website for all child protection professionals with shared news, events and connections pages with the MARS. Includes an online index of research studies.
- Linked in with Child Protection Committees through the National CPC Coordinator who has chaired or facilitated a number of SCCPN events.
- Developing links with existing national networks such as the Centre for Learning in Child Protection (CLiCP) to facilitate development of proposals on analysis of, and learning from SCRs and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services.
- Developing links with international networks including CP professionals in Australia, England, Wales and Ireland. An SCCPN representative has also been invited to be part of an international academic network application on childhood, law and children's rights – 'Childnet', led by the Universidad Pontificia Comillas (Madrid).

- Coordinated survey of practitioners' research needs 'What Can Research Do for You?' – generated large response (386 completed questionnaires) and a growth of interest in the network with 76 individuals making contact to explore ways to become more involved as a result.
- In the months between January 2010 and February 2011, the SCCPN website received a total of 2361 visits, of which 1275 were unique visitors from 10 countries including the UK. On average the website receives about 197 visits per month.
- Responding to ad-hoc requests on a regular basis ranging from requests to share information via emails to the network, signposts to individuals to speak at events or participate in consultations, promoting own research via the network, signposts to existing research on particular topics, and requests for information specific to Scotland and relating to legislation, policy and statistics as way in for researchers outside Scotland.

### 7.3 Effectiveness of Awareness Raising

Based on information from the web survey (332 respondents), half of all respondents were either very familiar (14%, n=47) or quite familiar (36%, n=120) with the SCCPN. This is almost exactly the same as the proportion of respondents who were familiar with the MARS. Further analysis shows that 94% of respondents who had previously stated that they were very familiar with the MARS also stated that they were either very (52%, n=27) or quite familiar (42%, n=22) with the SCCPN showing that the two are very much interlinked.

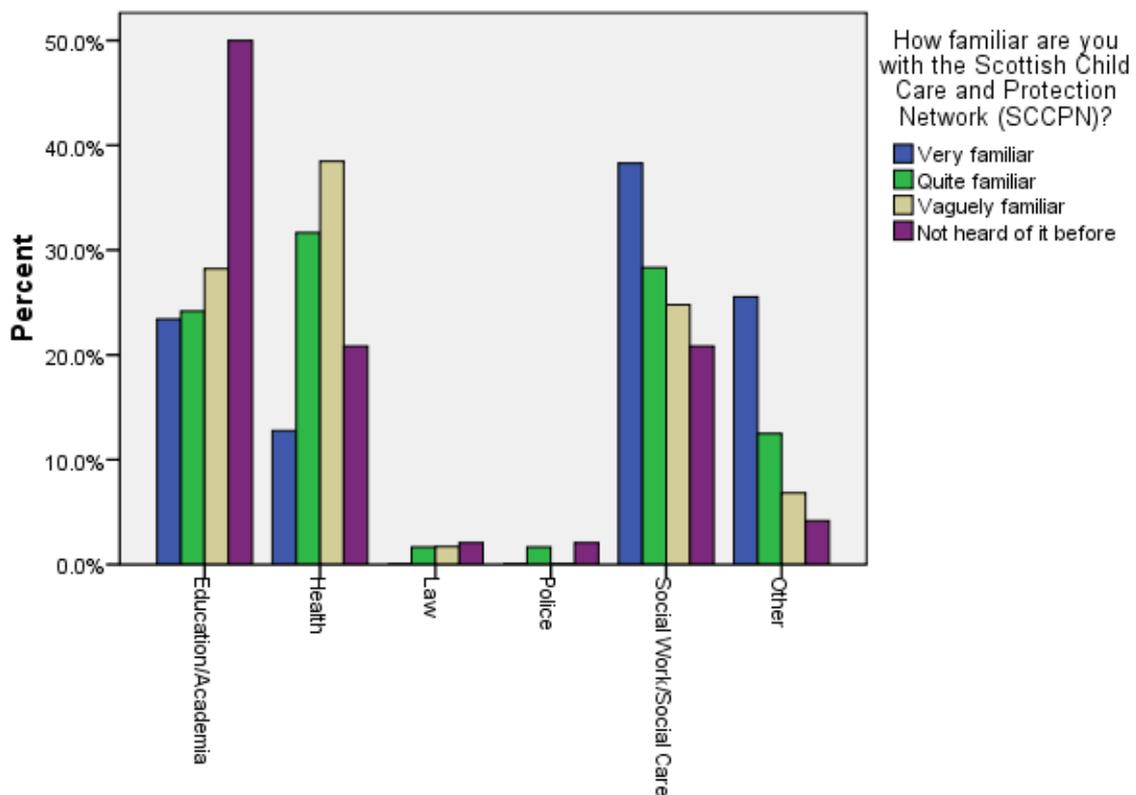


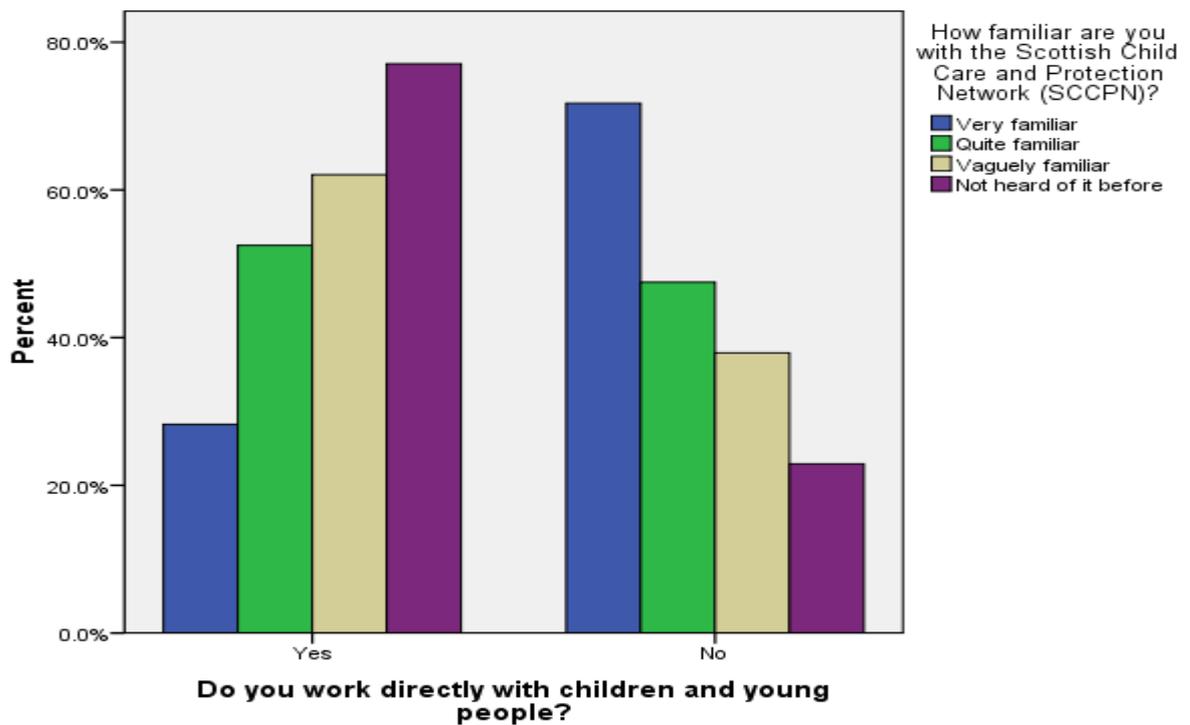
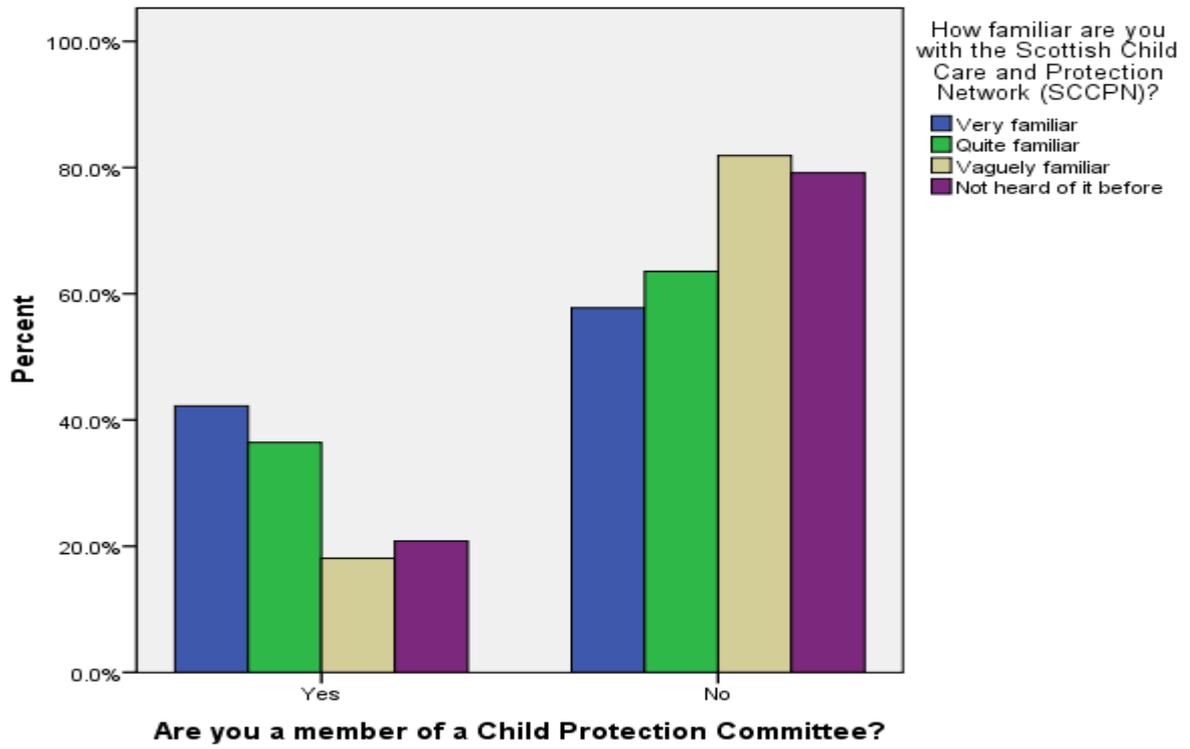
Alternatives	Percent	Value
1 Very familiar	14,2 %	47
2 Quite familiar	36,1 %	120
3 Vaguely familiar	35,2 %	117
4 Not heard of it before	14,5 %	48
Total		332

Further analysis of the familiarity of respondents with the SCCPN by profession, membership of a CPC and whether they work directly with children are shown below.

- Respondents working in a Social Work/Social Care setting are most likely to be 'very familiar' with the SCCPN (38%, n=18)
- Respondents from academia/education were most likely to state they had never heard of the SCCPN before (50%, n=24)
- In contrast to the MARS, members of CPCs were less likely to be very familiar with the SCCPN as compared to non-members of CPCs (42%, n=19 vs 58%, n=26)
- Respondents who work directly with children are more likely to state they have never heard of the SCCPN (77%, n=37) compared to those who do not work directly with children (23%, n=11) (see footnote 3).

**Familiarity with the SCCPN by Profession**





When asked how respondents first found out about the SCCPN, the most common sources were:

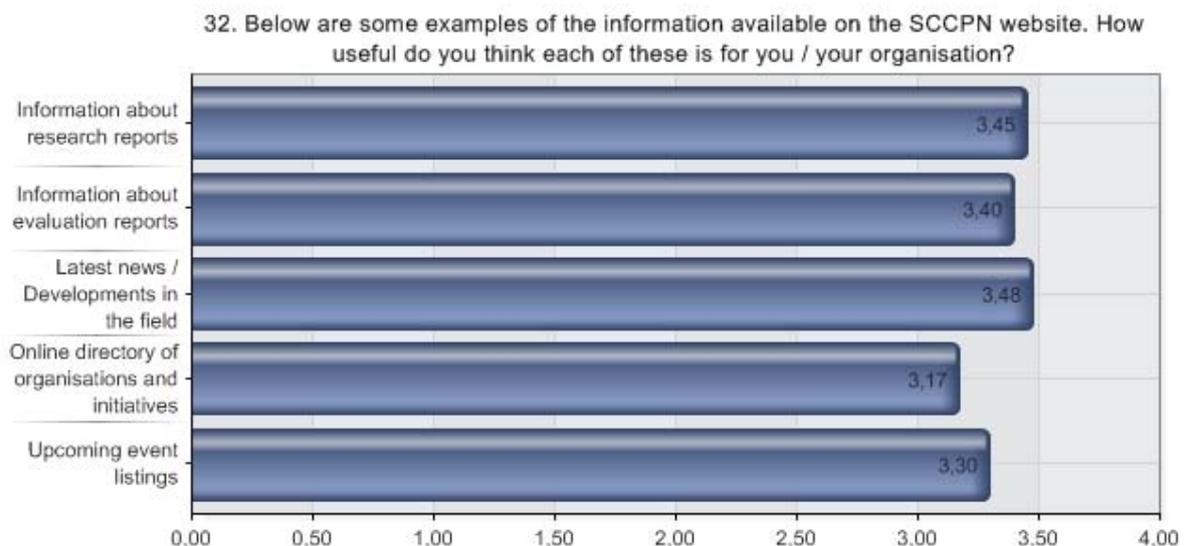
- Word of mouth (n=64)
- Direct mailing/Newsletter (n=59)
- Conference/seminar/event (n=56).

Stakeholders suggested that more could perhaps be done by members of the working groups to promote the work of the SCCPN in their own sectors, and particularly within health. One stakeholder suggested that undergraduate students showed a limited awareness of the SCCPN and should be targeted further.

#### 7.4 SCCPN Website (Signposting to Existing Research)

Part of the original objectives of the SCCPN as part of their three year funding allocation was to develop a web space which promoted the use of research evidence in practice. This has been done in conjunction with the MARS team and there are shared resources and links made between the two websites. The SCCPN website includes general information pages about the SCCPN, news pages, events calendar, connections directory and research index (containing an index of studies identified via the audit).

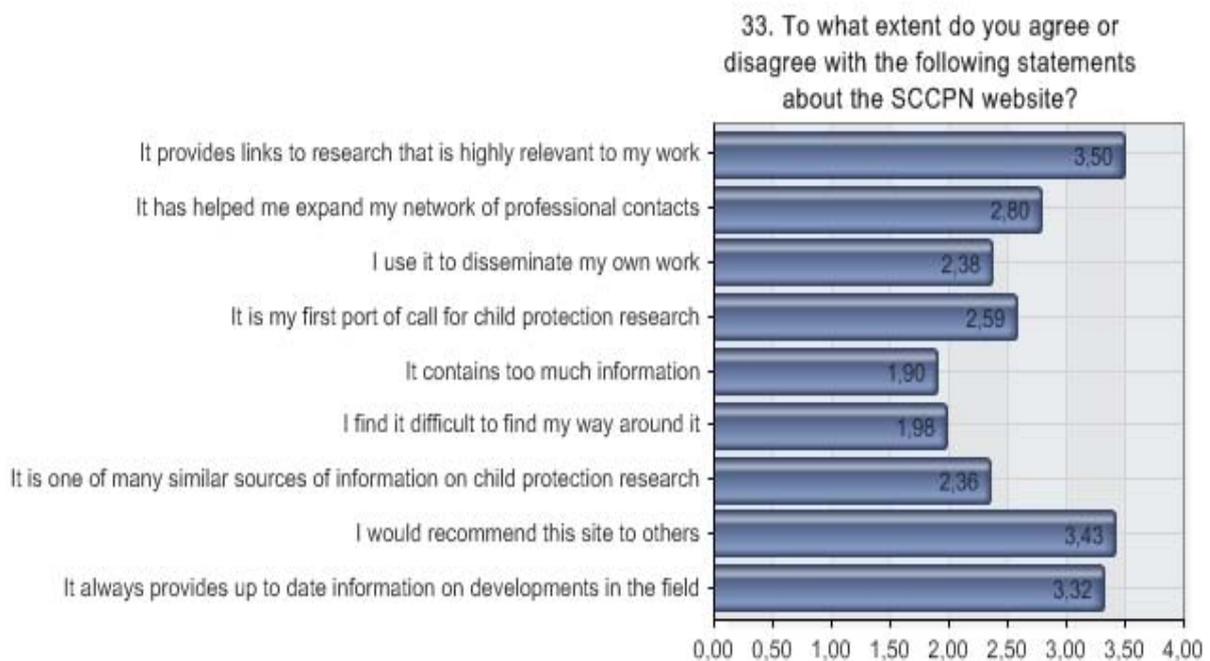
Just under half of all respondents to the web survey who previously stated that they were familiar with the SCCPN (either very, quite or vaguely) (n=284), also stated they had used the SCCPN website (46%, n=130). These respondents were asked how useful they found the various types of information available on the website. (The following correlates to a scale of 1 to 4 where 4 is very useful and 1 is not at all useful).



Alternatives	N
1 Information about research reports	124
2 Information about evaluation reports	117
3 Latest news / Developments in the field	121
4 Online directory of organisations and initiatives	114
5 Upcoming event listings	120

As shown above, respondents were generally positive about all types of information provided on the website with slightly lower ratings given to the online directory of organisations and initiatives.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with some set statements about the website. (Again using a scale of 1 to 4, where 4 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree).



As shown above, respondents most strongly agree with the following three statements:

- It provides links to research that are highly relevant to my work (n=130)
- I would recommend the site to others (n=123)
- It always provides up to date information on developments in the field (n=124).

When asked how the website could be made more useful, suggestions included:

- Brief bullet points allowing someone to skim read
- Incorporate local statistics and information
- Signpost agencies who support and offer CPD to professionals and other training opportunities.

## 7.5 Networking

Respondents who had stated they were familiar (either very, quite or vaguely) with the SCCPN were also asked whether they had developed any networks with other professionals through the SCCPN. The vast majority answered with either 'none or not applicable' (n=197). However, for those who have developed networks through the SCCPN, the most common groups were as follows:

- Practitioners (n=52)
- Researchers (n=44)
- Policy makers (n=26).

One quarter of respondents who were familiar with the SCCPN stated that they had made between one and five new contacts (25%, n=55) and 7%, (n=15) had made over five through the SCCPN.

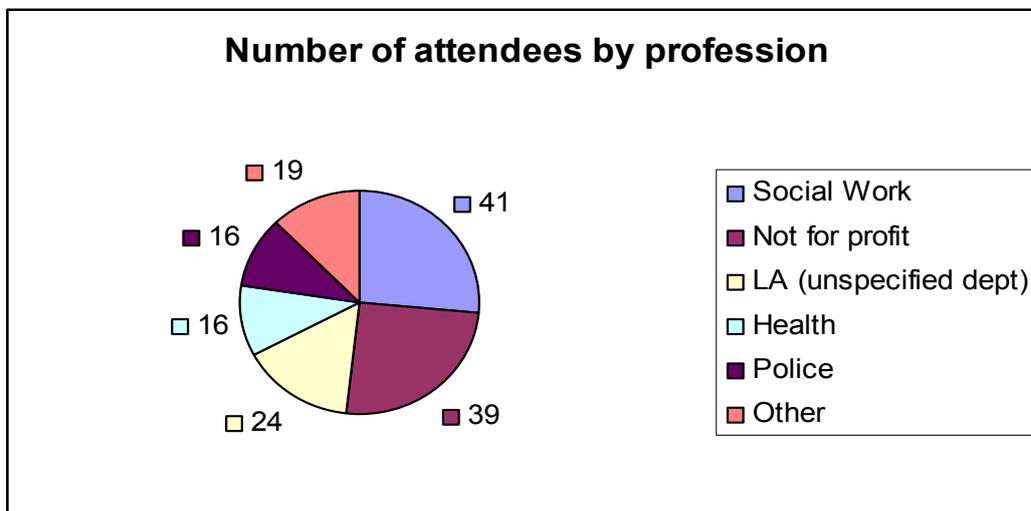
## 7.6 Dissemination Activities

One of the primary aims of the SCCPN is to increase access to research evidence on topics that are critical to practice. The SCCPN has now organised 14 separate seminars, conferences and workshops to date, covering a range of topics and locations:

1. In Dundee, May 2008, Seminar: Evidence to practice: Making the links for enhancing child safety
2. In Stirling, July 2009, Seminar: Using a public health approach to child protection, Professor Dorothy Scott. Jointly organised with University of Edinburgh/NSPCC Centre for UK-wide learning in child protection
3. In Perth, October 2010, Seminar: Working directly with children affected by harmful parental drinking. Jointly organised with the Scottish Network of Alcohol Practitioners for the Young (SNAPY)
4. In Stirling, October 2010, Seminar: Ecology of Judgement in Child Welfare and Protection. Jointly organised with the University of Stirling, School of Applied Social Science.
5. In Glasgow, November, 2010, National conference: Making Significant Case Reviews Fit for Purpose? A one-day conference to promote best practice in significant case reviews. Jointly organised with MARS and University of Edinburgh/NSPCC Centre for UK-wide learning in child protection
6. \*In Glasgow, February 2011, Workshop: What lessons can be learned by the police and partner agencies? A presentation on the recommendations of child abuse inquiries in respect of the police force
7. \*In Glasgow, March 2011, Workshop: "It takes big courage". Children and young people talk about living with parental alcohol problems and seeking support
8. \*In Glasgow, March 2011, Workshop: Family focused approaches to parental substance misuse
9. \*In Glasgow, March 2011, Workshop: Anxiety and child protection – implications for practice
10. \*In Glasgow, April 2011, Workshop: Child protection and disabled children: lessons from a scoping study

11. \*In Glasgow, April 2011, Workshop: Upstream and downstream in neglect: a public health approach to child protection
12. In Perth, May 2011, Workshop: Young people's views of the child protection system in Scotland
13. In Perth, May 2011, Workshop: Making sense of child and family assessment
14. In Glasgow, Meeting children's needs for care and protection seminar programme, supported by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute – 1. March 2011 – Data mining and linkage; 2. April 2011 – Designing longitudinal research in complex multi-professional environments.

The six seminar series held in Glasgow in March and April 2011 (highlighted above with '\*'), attracted significant interest, becoming fully booked very quickly and attracting a range of professionals, with the majority being from Social Work (n=41) or the Voluntary Sector (n=39), as shown below:



The map below shows the location of where these attendees are based, and shows a significant spread across the central belt but also a small number from the Aberdeen area.

# Attendance at Six SCCPN Contemporary Issues Seminars, Glasgow, February – April 2011

ATLANTIC OCEAN

SCCPN by postcode sector centroid



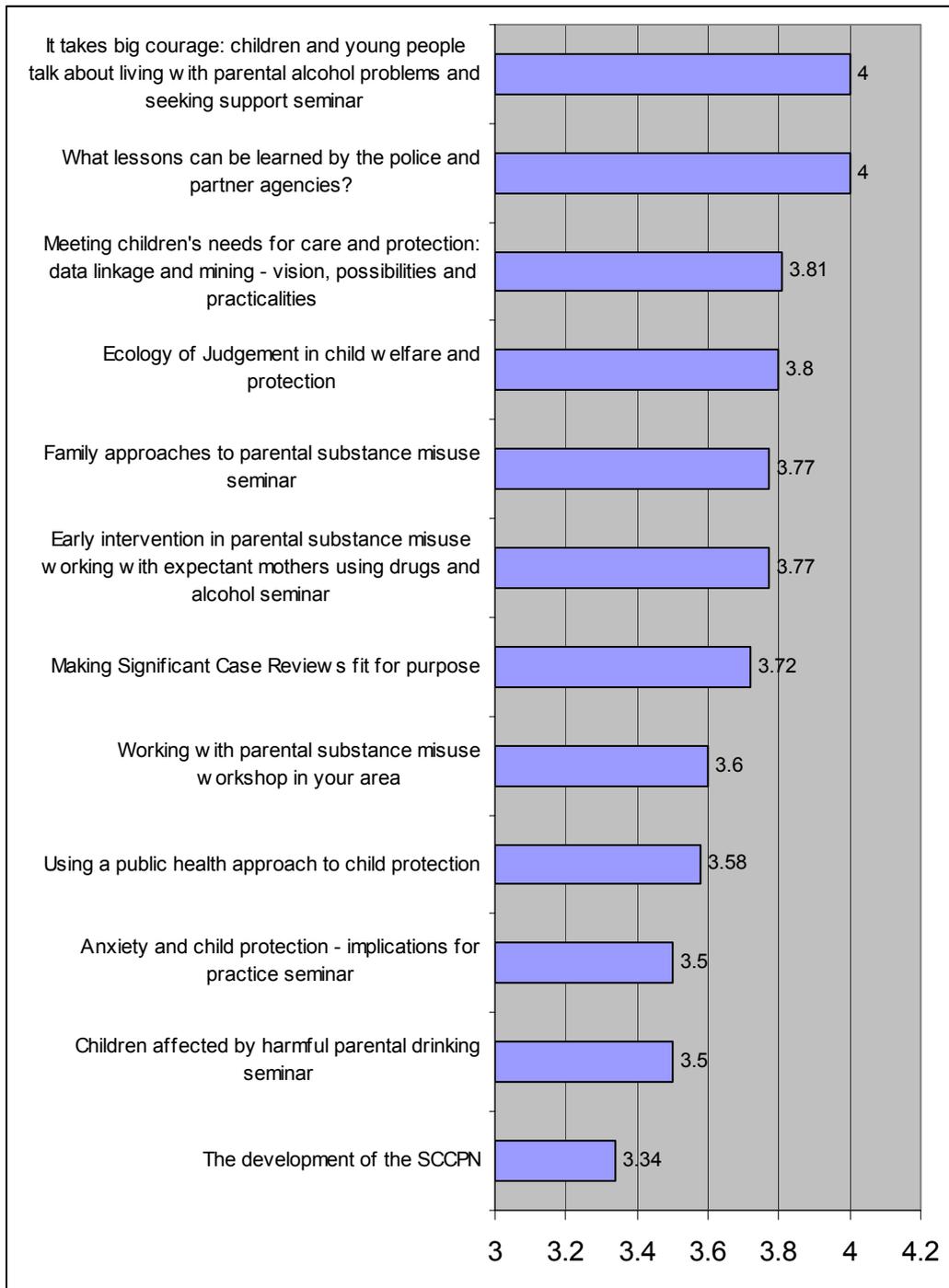
Scale: 1:2 500 000  
Sources: SG delegate list (2011) mapped against GROS 2010 postcodes.

© Crown copyright and database right (2011). All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100020540

Scottish Government, Geographic Information Science & Analysis Team (GI-SAT), April 2011. Job 5035



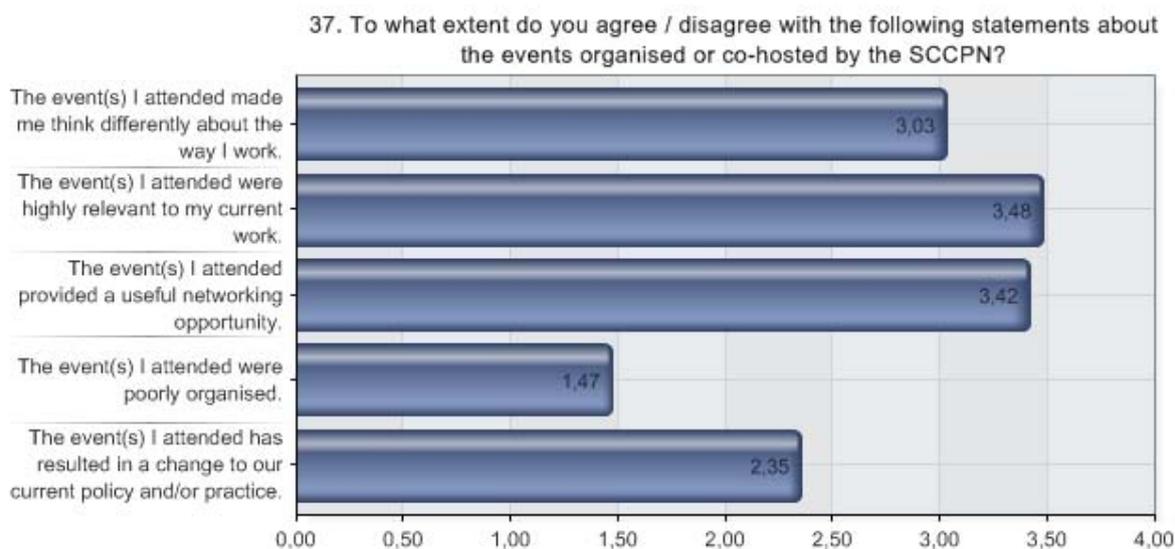
Almost one third of respondents to the web survey stated that they had attended an event organised or co-hosted by the SCCPN (31%, n=87). Respondents were then asked to rate the usefulness of the events which they attended. (Using a scale of 1 to 4, where 4 is very useful).



As shown, respondents were generally positive about all of the events listed above. In particular, 'what lessons can be learned by the police and partner agencies' (n=63) and 'it takes big courage – children and young people talk about living with parental alcohol problems and seeking support' seminar (n=61), received the most positive responses.

## 7.7 Effectiveness of Dissemination Activities

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about the events which they attended. (Using a scale of 1 to 4, where 4 is strongly agree).



Alternatives	N
1 The event(s) I attended made me think differently about the way I work.	90
2 The event(s) I attended were highly relevant to my current work.	91
3 The event(s) I attended provided a useful networking opportunity.	91
4 The event(s) I attended were poorly organised.	86
5 The event(s) I attended has resulted in a change to our current policy and/or practice.	87

As shown above by average scores, the majority of respondents agreed that the events were highly relevant, provided a useful networking opportunity and made them think differently about the way they work. There was comparatively less agreement that the events resulted in a change to current policy or practice with 40% (n=35) stating that they strongly or tended to disagree with that statement.

Stakeholders from the telephone interviews were also widely supporting of the dissemination activities of the SCCPN and in particular the recent seminar series.

*“The seminar series has been very successful, linking research to practice. The format was good – short input then an opportunity to discuss the issues...”*

*“The recent seminar series has been really excellent – gone right back to what the network should be doing and that’s because the resources were there.”*

The success of the SCCPN's dissemination activities can also be shown through the follow-up requests for support received. The Coordinator has been invited to attend various local CPC short workshop type events and has also been asked for support with developing a tool kit based on the review of children affected by parental substance misuse research.

Other practitioners however highlighted the difficulties in attending any event in such a time-restrained profession.

*"I've never been to any conferences and I'm not even sure if I'd be allowed to go. And we don't get a lot of warning for them because you have to be able to prioritise your work...I'm looking for someone to do all the work for me and send it to me in bite-size portions."*

## **7.8 Impact**

In order to assess the impact that the content of the SCCPN newsletters, events or website were having, respondents were asked for what purposes, if any, they had used them. Responses in order of most popular were:

- To develop my own professional knowledge (n=101)
- To share with others for information (n=80)
- To develop training materials (n=37)
- To help explain a concept to colleagues (n=33)
- To provide text or inform my/our publications (n=23)
- To disseminate my/our own research/events (n=18)
- To help inform a consultation response (n=17)
- To help colleagues in other sectors to share an understanding of what I do (n=10)
- **To make the case for a change to current policy/practice in a meeting (n=9)**
- To support a funding application (n=4).

From the above responses it appears that the most common use is in developing knowledge and understanding and sharing information with others, with only a small proportion suggesting that the evidence helped them make a case for a change to current policy or practice. This is perhaps not surprising in that it is difficult to directly attribute a change to policy or practice to any one particular piece of evidence or information source but rather it is more likely to form one of many contributory factors in the development of policy or practice. These results do however confirm the importance of having research evidence available in various different formats to increase accessibility and use.

## **CHAPTER 8: Short Term Outcome 4 - Increase the Relevance, Utility and Strength of the Evidence Base in Practice**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The SCCPN has attempted to increase the relevance, utility and strength of the evidence base by various means including several reviews of existing research, generating new evidence, including identifying gaps in the evidence base and playing a key role in brokering the most effective collaborations for future research.

The evidence presented in this section comes from analysis of key documents including successful funding bids, briefing papers, details of secondary and primary research activities and interviews with key stakeholders.

### **8.2 Secondary Research Activity**

One of the principal ways in which the SCCPN have increased the relevance, utility and strength of evidence for practice is through developing an understanding of what evidence already exists and what are the gaps. The SCCPN via members of the research working group and the Coordinator have either produced or commissioned the following research reviews and briefings:

#### ***Research reviews***

1. Marjorie Keys (2007) *The role of nurses and midwives in child protection*. Report to the Scottish Executive Health Department
2. Heike Tarara and Brigid Daniel (2007) *Audit of Scottish Child Care and Protection Research*. Report to the Scottish Government, Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning
3. Heike Tarara (2007) *Database of 10 Years of Scottish Child Care and Protection Research*
4. Pam Green Lister and Moira McKinnon (2010) *Report of literature review of recommendations of child abuse inquiries in respect of the Police Force*. Report to the Association of Chief Police Officers
5. Fiona Mitchell and Cheryl Burgess (2010) *Working with families affected by parental substance misuse*. Report for the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network.

#### ***Research briefings***

1. Jo Aldridge (2011) Children living with parents with mental illness. SCCPN briefing
2. Louise Hill (2011) Children living with parental substance misuse. SCCPN briefing
3. Cathy Sharp and Jocelyn Jones (2011) Children living with domestic abuse. SCCPN briefing
4. Janice McGhee and Susan Hunter (2011) Involving parents in assessment and decision-making. SCCPN briefing
5. Helen Whincup (2011) Involving children in assessment and decision-making. SCCPN briefing
6. Lesley Kelly (2011) What can research do for you? Findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study. GUS briefing developed in partnership with SCCPN.

Stakeholders widely acknowledged the significant contribution of the SCCPN in terms of reviewing existing evidence and pulling this together to increase the relevance and utility for practitioners.

*“There has been a good job done in terms of collating in one place what research there has been around in Scotland and making that easily accessible nationally. But also communicating and analysis of what’s been covered, what research is saying and what are the gaps...”*

*“They did a very good literature review on what the current state of knowledge is and they disseminated that – I found that extremely useful. It’s a bit outdated now but at the time was a very useful piece of work and actually identified the need for a longitudinal research on what works for children in the longer term, how do they benefit and how do you measure the outcomes”.*

The Coordinator highlighted that a key part of her role was to keep up to date with current needs and gaps in the evidence base and this is achieved through business meetings with different policy groups, dissemination activities etc. This also provides an insight into training needs and how that fits with developing core competencies. The Coordinator noted the consistency across the country with the issues that staff are struggling with. There is, of course, the question over whose responsibility it is to keep up to date with current developments and new evidence in the field. This may be a lot easier for more senior professionals and academics who tend to be involved with high level policy groups or professional bodies.

The SCCPN has also developed strong links with the National CPC Coordinator which provides another means of identifying where the (perceived) gaps in the evidence base lie and also enables a two-way exchange of information.

*“I hear a lot through the Lead Officers of what are perceived to be the gaps and pressures...so when [the Coordinator’s] organising seminars I have a pretty clear idea of what people out there are looking for and what fits with our CPC agenda and she gives me a lot of really interesting information to put out to the CPCs – we can then get a lot of research evidence that is directly relevant to their needs out to them...”* (National CPC Coordinator)

### **8.3 Generating New Evidence through Research or Evaluation Activities**

The SCCPN undertook a consultation with practitioners from across Scotland in 2008/2009 to find out what practitioners see as priorities for research and about what helps and hinders them to access and use research in practice. The questionnaire was sent to practitioners working in education, police, social work and health roles across all sectors (public, voluntary and private). The findings of the report ‘*What Can Research Do For You?*’ were disseminated both nationally and locally.

*“One of the first things that [the Coordinator] got off the ground was this survey of practitioners’ views...and that was helpful because it generated a lot of information about what people on the ground were actually tussling with but it also demonstrated what a thirst there was for research evidence because sometimes there’s this perception that people in practice are not all that interested in research that they*

*would rather use practice wisdom but that didn't come through at all – people were really keen to access research evidence - they just wanted it in a form that they could use and that was useful... that gave us a solid chunk of stuff to work with”.*

The SCCPN has also secured funding (£25K) from the Scottish Universities Insight Institute to bring together academics, professionals and policy makers to explore issues relating to the measurement of outcomes for children and young people over time and issues relating to the methodology of longitudinal studies.

#### **8.4 Collaborations (Bring the Right Experience Together)**

The SCCPN also plays a key role in encouraging what may be viewed as the most effective partnerships and collaborations based on areas of known expertise and skills. For example, the Coordinator brokered a partnership between an academic from Stirling University (Chris Macllquham) and Stirling Council to draw together a successful proposal for a small scale, knowledge exchange project on pre-birth intervention with women who are using drugs or alcohol.

#### **8.5 Challenges**

Stakeholders suggested that one of the potential challenges for the SCCPN is how it determines where its research priorities should lie, for example whether these should be determined by relevant funding opportunities, the national government agenda or locally identified priorities and gaps at the level of the practitioner. It was suggested that to some extent the network has been utilised on a national level on a more ad-hoc rather than systematic basis for example where there is a national need for evidence they have responded well and produced a quality report, (eg Working Directly with Children Affected by Harmful Parental Drinking). However, it may be that the priorities of the SCCPN in conducting both secondary and primary research, and how these are determined, need to be reviewed as part of future developments.

## **CHAPTER 9: INFLUENCING NATIONAL POLICY**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes whether the MARS and the SCCPN have influenced the national policy agenda on child protection.

The evidence presented in this section comes from interviews with key stakeholders including the Head of the Child Protection Policy Team at the Scottish Government and the documentary analysis.

### **9.2 Background**

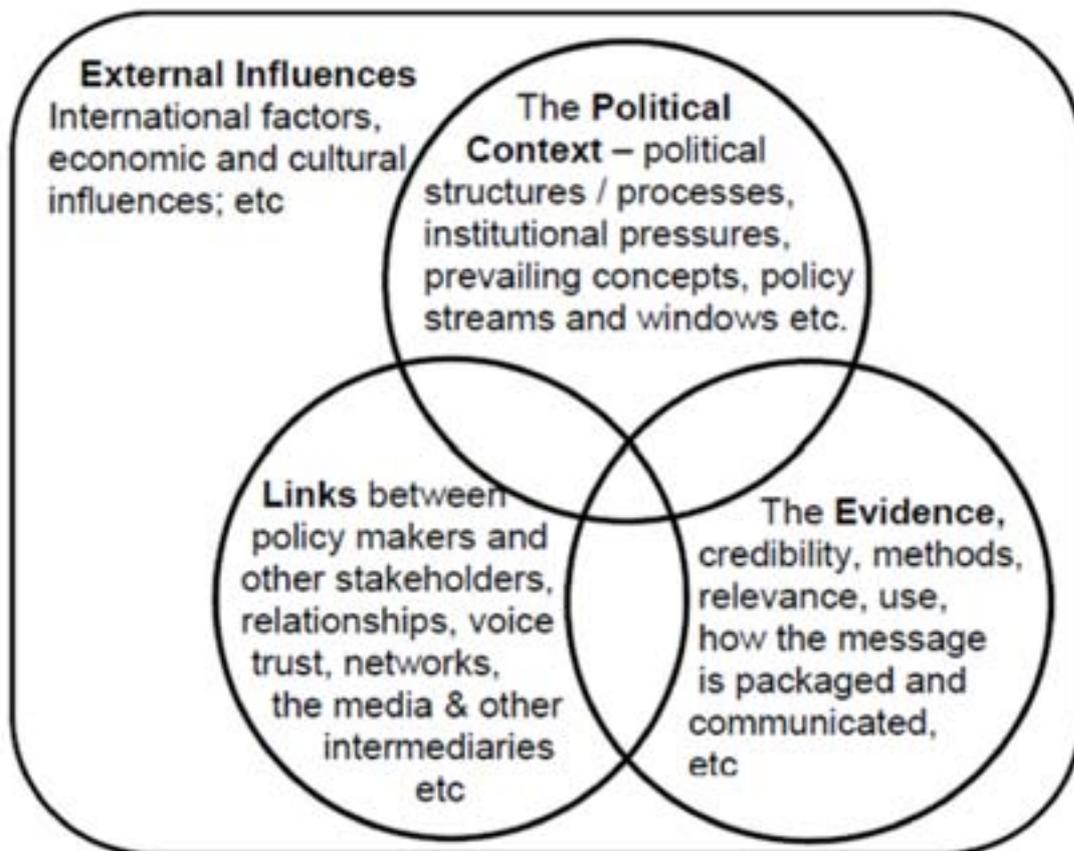
It was acknowledged by many that the landscape of child protection has changed quite significantly over the last ten years with more organisations working collaboratively and the increasing realisation that there is a need to learn from each other and share best practice while avoiding unnecessary duplication. In parallel with this the Scottish Government has undertaken significant consultation activity with the child protection field in launching the new revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2010. This covers new areas of practice such as keeping children safe online and child trafficking and is based on the principles of *Getting it right for every child*, the Scottish Government's approach to ensuring children get earlier, effective and integrated support from all agencies to prevent problems escalating. Staff from the MARS and the SCCPN played a prominent role in contributing to this guidance.

### **9.3 Model of Policy Influence**

There are several known inter-connected influencers of national policy, some of which have been usefully summarised in the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) framework below <sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Research and Policy in Development, Overseas Development Institute



For the purposes of this review, we can usefully explore both the MARS and the SCCPN’s influence on national policy using the following three classifications as suggested by Lindquist (2003)<sup>5</sup>:

**1) Expanding policy capacities** (*may include improving the knowledge or certain actors, supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas, improving capabilities to communicate ideas*)

Capacity has been a key factor in taking forward the National Training Framework. This work began approximately 4-5 years ago but was not completed for various reasons. Due to the enthusiastic participation of the staff within both the MARS and the SCCPN, the issue was kept on the agenda because those involved were convinced it was an extremely important issue for practitioners. This continued enthusiasm contributed to the framework being kept on the agenda. The MARS and SCCPN team have now led on bringing together the key stakeholders who have an interest in moving this forward, thereby enabling the capacity for this issue to be taken up again.

The MARS team also cited their work on adult protection as an issue which they picked up and subsequently generated substantial debate and discussion within the Scottish Government.

<sup>5</sup> Lindquist, Evert A., 2003, ‘Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research’. International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada.

**2) Broadening policy horizons** (*may include providing opportunities for networking/learning within the jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere; introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda or stimulating debate*)

The recent seminar series which the SCCPN have initiated and in particular the work of the Coordinator on children affected by parental substance misuse was cited as most influential in terms of stimulating useful debate and opening up dialogues. Also cited here was the series of events on examining existing data around children (Data linkage) which was thought to be a good example of how we can think much more creatively and widely beyond what we would traditionally think about. This approach was also felt to broaden ideas, introduce new ways of thinking about things by 'simply bringing people together in the same room to talk about it'.

**3) Affecting policy regimes** (*may include the modification of existing programmes or policies, fundamental redesign of programmes or policies*)

Clearly, this type of policy influence may be expected to take a far longer period of time to evidence. However, examples were given of the work in which the MARS team undertook as part of the Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews. They responded quickly and efficiently to the task in hand and developed an 'inclusive' approach to ensuring the range of stakeholders had a chance to contribute. As a result of this work, they provided a series of recommendations to the Scottish Government which are (or will) change policy and practice.

#### **9.4 Overall**

Overall, the evidence suggests that both the MARS and the SCCPN have influenced national policy through stimulating debate and dialogue, introducing ideas and concepts, maintaining a high profile within different policy areas in the Scottish Government, engaging and taking account of the views of a range of stakeholders, and overall developing a positive working relationship with the Scottish Government.

## **CHAPTER 10: VALUE FOR MONEY**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the evidence as to whether both the MARS and the SCCPN (are perceived to) have provided good value for money in pursuing their aims and objectives.

The evidence for chapter comes from interviews with stakeholders including the MARS and the SCCPN teams, documentary analysis of financial planning documents, processes and spend to date.

### **10.2 Cost-Effectiveness of the MARS**

It was beyond the scope of this review to undertake a full cost-effectiveness analysis. However, an attempt was made to estimate the efficiency savings to individuals and their organisations who had received direct advice or support from the MARS team or a member of a Community of Expertise by way of analysing the time taken for the MARS to source and provide the information required and the time/resources saved to the individual organisation requesting the advice/support. As reported in Chapter 4, the main types of requests received to date can be broken down as follows:

- Signposting to research evidence/good practice/policy documents
- Advice/direct support for a complex case
- Sourcing Training and Development resources
- Requests for speakers/facilitators
- Support developing policy and procedures
- Support with Significant Case Reviews/Internal Reviews
- Support to commission research
- Request for specialist resources.

An electronic questionnaire was devised and sent to five individuals who had previously contacted the MARS. It aimed to ascertain whether as a result of contacting the MARS, what difference the advice or support received had made, what likely impact it had (or will have) to policy or practice either now or in the future and whether there had been any time or resource savings to either the individual or the wider organisation. This would have allowed us to form some understanding of the value of this knowledge exchange service. Unfortunately, only two people completed this questionnaire and both felt unable to complete the efficiency savings estimates. A further potential respondent was also contacted via telephone but they also felt unable to make these estimations.

It may have been possible with more time to contact all 37 individuals/organisations who have made contact with the MARS to ask them to estimate efficiency savings, however for many of these requests, a significant amount of time has now passed and asking people to rely on memory for this type of estimation can produce unreliable results. It is suggested therefore that for future cost-effectiveness measures, that questions such as those set out above are added in to the MARS standard feedback request forms and this information can then be gathered as a matter of course and reported on at any point in time.

### ***Value of Contribution to Short Life Working Groups***

As discussed previously, the Director of the MARS was involved in convening and chairing a Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews which provided recommendations to the Scottish Government for a change to current policy and practice. This involved significant input as follows:

- Organised and chaired meetings
- Produced and circulated minutes
- Recorded all materials
- Devised and implemented survey of CPC Chairs, analysed and reported on results.
- Literature review
- Wrote a final and interim report on behalf of SLWG
- Presentations to the Scottish Child Protection Committee Chairs Forum
- Ongoing communications and feedback to stakeholders
- Contribution to paper on scrutiny/central collation point.

It is important to recognise the added value that was gained from the Director of the MARS involvement through her substantial network of key stakeholders from a range of disciplines, knowledge and experience in the field of child protection, reputation and credibility, and skills in pulling together this type of information in a short period of time (as compared with commissioning an external consultant).

### **10.3 Structures and Processes**

The MARS and the SCCPN have similar governance and management structures. Both the MARS and the Coordinator role are funded for a period of three years and both have set out their aims, objectives, work plan, risk assessment plan, measures of success and anticipated outcomes within their internal strategic documents. Both are governed by a wider steering group which meets regularly with representatives from across the child protection community. They are also directly responsible to the Scottish Government (in the case of MARS, as the current sole funder) for achieving the objectives as originally specified (for the SCCPN within their original funding proposal).

The MARS and the SCCPN are currently hosted by the University of Stirling who monitor the financial planning processes in place. There is also a business development team within the University who are assisting with business planning and costing for future sustainability.

The staff within the MARS and the SCCPN teams have regular individual and team meetings which are recorded. The Director of the MARS and the SCCPN Coordinator are part of the University of Stirling's appraisal system. The flexibility of the budget as agreed by the Scottish Government allowed some reallocation of resources for the Events and Communications Manager post for one year. There was also a temporary, short-term administrative staff member who was tasked with updating the joint mailing list. This involved contacting all current members and

targeting new contacts to ask whether they wished to receive the regular e-bulletin and other news alerts.

There is substantial evidence within both the MARS and the SCCPN minutes of progress reports and steering group meetings of the discussions around future activities, any proposed changes in direction, use of resources, etc. Future priorities are agreed within the wider steering groups before being actioned.

Neither the MARS nor the SCCPN have been asked to formally report on outcomes to the Scottish Government before now, however as mentioned previously, the process for setting objectives was guided by a substantial consultation exercise which the MARS team conducted with all CPCs in Scotland to gather views, and a similar consultation exercise which the SCCPN conducted to gather the views of practitioners, both of which was supported by the Scottish Government. Similarly the current and future planned activities and outcomes of both bodies are set out in detail within their internal documents. From a review of the budgets to date, all activities have been carried out within budget and both have generated additional funding to varying degrees through separate activities (eg scoping study on adult protection by the MARS, numerous successful funding bids by the SCCPN).

#### **10.4 Views from Stakeholders on Value for Money**

##### ***MARS***

The MARS staff highlighted the Short Life Working Group and the Conference on Significant Case Reviews as particular examples of where they can provide real value for money in getting results in short space of time. They highlighted their pride in their achievements to date with what was felt to be a dedicated and committed team but were also mindful of the short period of time they have been in place in terms of what can practically be achieved. Stakeholders also highlighted the benefit of the Significant Case Review work as being of immediate use to their current work and that this type of central dissemination was of great value to them.

Others suggested that the value for money that the MARS provides is that it is a shared resource for the whole of Scotland and therefore provides efficiency savings for everyone. For example, it was proposed that if all CPCs were to invest in the MARS in the future then they would see substantial returns on their investment in terms of work being done at the centre only once instead of all 30 CPCs doing their own thing. It will also give a consistency of approach.

##### ***SCCPN***

The SCCPN staff highlighted the significant amount of goodwill contributions that goes into the activities of the SCCPN which are maximised through the input of the Coordinator, particularly in terms of research generation. One example given was the analysis of public inquiries with respect to recommendations for the police conducted by Dr Pam Green Lister of which approximately £6000 funding was received but which a 'phenomenal' amount of time was put into producing the report. This seems to underlie the ethos of the network in that people are working as a joint endeavour towards a common end which also shows the strength of commitment

within the field. Other examples of achievements which were felt to demonstrate how the network has provided good value for money were

- The Carnegie Trust proposal to develop longitudinal work on outcomes for children which is a particular gap within Scotland
- The Parental Substance Misuse work – significant research and dissemination work was undertaken with minimal additional funding (£3000) attached
- Drawing in other academics to contribute to the current seminar series and distilling evidence in a way that is practitioner focused.

Stakeholders also gave examples of the accessible and relevant dissemination activities for practitioners, time ‘in kind’ by several academics as part of a wider knowledge exchange, briefing papers, primary and secondary research activities, work on data mining and how we can use data in a more cost-effective way.

*“I’d go back to it really punching above it’s weight in fostering collaborations and networks – successful research activities, roadshows, bids. My job is made much much easier in having access to the network. I wouldn’t otherwise know what research was being done elsewhere or I wouldn’t normally meet a number of other people in a different profession to me –and it’s very well respected...”*

## **10.5 Future Studies**

It may be an interesting exercise for the future to calculate the amount of funding that the (funded) SCCPN Coordinator post has generated, in addition to the (unfunded) time that other members of the steering group have put into the SCCPN’s activities to assess the actual cost-effectiveness of this post.

Again it would be a matter for more in-depth future studies to examine longer term outcomes for the users as to whether they felt their practitioners had improved practice (through increased knowledge or access to evidence) and the impact on outcomes for them.

## **CHAPTER 11: MERGING THE MARS AND SCCPN**

### **11.1 Introduction**

It has been proposed by the Sustainability Sub-Group (see Chapter 3) that the MARS and the SCCPN merge to form one central Scottish Child Protection Hub (name to be confirmed). This central Hub will combine the practice knowledge of the MARS with the research expertise of the SCCPN. It would also provide a platform for exchange of expertise on an international basis. It is proposed that this new resource will allow for greater sustainability in the longer term.

Stakeholders were asked their views on this proposed merger and what they considered to be the advantages and/or challenges to this approach.

### **11.2 Support**

The vast majority of stakeholders recognised the logic of combining the MARS and the SCCPN in terms of having one external face, one website, and one administrative structure. It was agreed that together they would provide a unique combination of the knowledge generation, dissemination and operational support. This means that when MARS offers support it can be underpinned not only by practice wisdom provided by the CoEs but also by the research evidence.

*“You have someone in [the SCCPN Coordinator] who has the knowledge base to do the research tasks practically, so can connect opinions, views, literature searches, etc. You have in [the National CPC Coordinator] someone who taps into all of the CPCs in Scotland in a way that is quite objective and who can pull together some of the practical issues so therefore you have the ability to commission research from practice and the ability to plug gaps in the knowledge base so you have a really good supportive network which not only achieves what the Western Isles report says but goes further in pulling together the learning from all CPCs and disseminating that across the country. I think it is genuinely a good network and they’ve made it available to all practitioners and managers alike.”*

*“I think it’s the way to go. In terms of the flexibility to combine different functions and the service as packages for particular clients needs it will work more effectively. Having that formally recognised and having it branded will be much more useful”*

### **11.3 Role**

It was suggested that the Hub should ‘galvanise the expertise of people out there’ and have a central role in collating the knowledge and best practice from the numerous and varied projects and initiatives that are going on across Scotland. The Hub should be about linking conversations on a national basis to progress them. It should not however, become a repository for expertise and evidence but make sure that everyone is actively engaged across the child protection community.

## **11.4 Location**

Both the MARS and the SCCPN team acknowledged the significant benefits of already being co-located within Stirling University and being able to share resources and avoid duplication. There are recognised benefits to having a critical mass in one place with the expertise to bounce off each other. Regular combined meetings also allow a sharing of knowledge and ideas. However it was also raised as a general concern by some stakeholders about the increasing centralisation of services (in Stirling and Edinburgh) and suggested that any future activity should be split up or make full use of other academic institutions. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of maintaining research collaborations, an openness and a Scottish perspective rather than having a centre that could be perceived as belonging to Stirling.

## **11.5 A Local Service Provided Nationally**

One suggestion was that representatives of local services should get together themselves to identify common problems, agree on the solutions which they then can themselves take forward but make use of common resources, such as the Hub, to be able to solve those problems. This could be through both the practical advice and support that MARS currently provides as well as the research evidence from the SCCPN to feed into that advice. It was suggested that the combined Hub should take increased direction from a more collectively determined set of priorities such as the Scottish Child Protection Committee Chair's Forum which would allow a clear route through which the needs of practitioners could be addressed<sup>6</sup>.

## **11.6 Reservations**

There were some concerns raised by stakeholders that the research generation aspect of the SCCPN could get 'swamped' or lost under the operational, practice side of the MARS. It is possible that the SCCPN could lose both its identity, coordination and its focus. There was also concern raised that this merger may be perceived as a 'cost-cutting' exercise.

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<sup>6</sup> The SCCCPF is aiming to agree a programme of national priorities by spring 2011.

## CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

This chapter attempts to provide answers to the five research questions posed at the start of this review by summarising the evidence detailed throughout the report. The fifth question on the future of both the MARS and the SCCPN also brings forward new evidence from the web survey and stakeholder interviews.

It is again stressed that there needs to be sensitivity when interpreting these results, as to where the MARS and the SCCPN are within their relative project cycles and that it may be too early for the potential benefits and impacts to be fully recognised at this stage. Similarly, it has not been possible as part of this review to undertake a full cost-effectiveness exercise and therefore there may also be unanswered questions as to whether the MARS and the SCCPN have received a sufficient level of funding and resources to enable them to fully achieve their respective objectives.

**1) To what extent has the MARS/SCCPN delivered on its set aims and objectives and what processes have been put in place to meet these objectives?**

### **MARS**

The evidence gathered through this review has clearly demonstrated that the MARS has successfully implemented a substantial number of processes and activities to help achieve its primary objective of coordinating the exchange of knowledge across agencies. This has been accomplished through a significant amount of awareness raising activity including dissemination, developing a shared web space and online discussion forum, producing and contributing to a regular joint MARS/SCCPN newsletter/e-bulletin, media coverage and networking across the spectrum of child protection professions. It has assisted in 'brokering and facilitating links across the child protection sector in Scotland, nationally and internationally through developing Communities of Expertise, developing links with existing resources, and also by raising the MARS' own profile and credibility through the professionalism of the team.

In terms of the original two objectives of 'identifying gaps in service provision or training needs to inform local and national development' and 'contributing to the development and promotion of national strategic training and CPD framework', it is recognised by both the MARS team and wider stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, that while these have (necessarily) not taken priority in terms of time and resources, they are activities that are now moving higher up the agenda and it is expected that the MARS will have a key role to play in developing the National Training Framework alongside other key stakeholders. By nature of the role that the MARS play in having direct and ongoing contact with practitioners, managers and policy-makers and via the National CPC Coordinator, the team have already developed some understanding of what the common issues are for professionals in the field and where their common needs lie.

## **SCCPN**

For the purposes of this review, the original objectives of both the SCCPN and the SCCPN Coordinator role have been explored in terms of their commitment to 1) increase access to and use of research evidence and 2) increase the strength, utility and relevance of the evidence base in practice.

As detailed previously, the SCCPN has organised and developed a range of activities to increase the accessibility and use of research evidence within practice including jointly producing and contributing to the MARS/SCCPN newsletter/e-bulletin, developing a web space complete with research index, organising a series of interactive seminar series and contributing to various other dissemination events, contributing to national working groups and developing links with both national and international child protection networks. It has also played a part in increasing the strength, utility and relevance of the existing evidence base by contributing to several highly regarded research reviews and a series of research briefings. They have also generated new evidence through a survey of practitioners' needs and have secured further funding to explore issues relating to the measurement of outcomes for children and young people over time to inform future longitudinal studies. Through the Coordinator, the SCCPN is continually looking for future research funding opportunities with a view to further strengthening the evidence base and promoting the most effective collaborations between researchers.

### **2) To what extent has the MARS/SCCPN been successful in reaching their target audience and what has been their effectiveness and impact to date?**

#### **MARS**

Evidence from the web survey of 332 child protection professionals suggests that the MARS is reaching a significant amount of its target population but that there is more that can be done in terms of both raising awareness and clarifying the purpose of the MARS, particularly within the health and education sectors and those working directly with children. For those who have used the services provided by the MARS there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of support provided with the majority of respondents to the web survey stated that they would contact the MARS again if necessary in the future.

The MARS has received 60 requests to date at the time of this review for more direct support (ie via telephone or email). Approximately one quarter of these (n=16) have been for specific support or advice with a complex child protection case. The majority of requests are for signposting to relevant research or resources. As discussed previously, there are obvious difficulties in assessing the actual impact of the MARS advice and support on outcomes for children. There was suggestion by respondents however that part of the short-term impact for them has been through clarifying decision-making and streamlining processes.

## **SCCPN**

Evidence from the web survey suggests that the level of familiarity among child protection professionals with the SCCPN is very similar to the MARS with around half of respondents stating that they were either very or quite familiar with the network. Again, those working in social work were more likely to have heard of the network as compared to respondents in either education or health. The SCCPN website was well regarded with most respondents suggesting it provided relevant and up to date information and they would recommend it to others.

The dissemination activities of the SCCPN were also viewed positively by the majority of attendees, particularly the seminars entitled 'it takes big courage: children and young people talk about living with parental alcohol problems and seeking support' and 'what lessons can be learned by the police and partner agencies'. Many attendees agreed that the events made them think differently about the way they work, were highly relevant to their work and provided a useful networking opportunity. A smaller proportion believed that the events they attended resulted in a change to policy or practice.

The published research reviews which the network has produced and the series of briefing notes are highly regarded by stakeholders and widely viewed as being high quality, relevant and useful. Similarly the survey of practitioners' needs and priorities were seen as an important starting block on which to base future research priorities.

However, the overwhelming consensus when talking to practitioners was that the combination of resource shortages and 'information overload' meant that there was often confusion of which services were available to them, how they differed from other services and what their primary purpose was. Similarly events and conferences were perceived as very difficult to fit into a busy schedule as was having the time to read new research evidence and statistics. They were first and foremost therefore looking for practical, hands-on tools to help them conduct their jobs more efficiently and effectively, for any research evidence to be presented to them in an easy to (skim) read, short format and for their to be a long lead-in time to events to allow them to build into their busy schedules.

### **3) To what extent has the MARS/SCCPN influenced national child protection policy to date and how has this been achieved?**

#### **MARS**

It has been suggested that where the MARS has been most influential and had the most impact has been through its work on the Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews. The strength of the MARS' input was to bring together stakeholders with the appropriate skills and expertise, harness this knowledge and expertise within a relatively short time frame and having the perceived neutrality of a multi-agency background. They brought a report together with a high degree of credibility attached and has resulted in a series of recommendations which will bring about a change to national government policy and practice.

Similarly, through the team's continued enthusiasm and conviction, it has succeeded in maintaining a place on the national agenda for the National Training Framework to recommence and MARS is likely to play a pivotal role in this.

### **SCCPN**

The SCCPN has stimulated debate and opened up dialogues through its recent seminar series and in particular through the work of the Coordinator on the Children affected by Parental Substance Misuse research. Furthermore, the series of events on examining existing data around children (data linkage) was thought to particularly influential in times where everyone is having to think more creatively about how best use is made of existing resources.

The SCCPN also had representation on the Short Life Working Group on Significant Case Reviews and is involved in developing the future National Training Framework alongside the MARS.

#### **4) Does the MARS/SCCPN represent good value for money?**

### **MARS**

This review has explored whether the MARS is perceived to have provided good value for money by stakeholders and has also examined the structural and management procedures in place. Again the example of the MARS' contribution to Significant Case Reviews is perceived to demonstrate how MARS can provide value for money by way of the experience, skills and knowledge of the team and the usefulness and relevance of this type of work for professionals across Scotland.

Stakeholders were keen to point out the value for all local areas was in the MARS providing a national service which avoided 'reinventing the wheel 32 times'. Stakeholders suggested that in times of financial constraints, organisations are getting leaner and there was a need to make better use of people's time instead of everyone doing their own thing. It was suggested that some localised resources can get into ruts but if there was a central collation of issues and ideas from across Scotland then everyone can benefit from the learning. Examples given of issues which would benefit from a national approach are varying thresholds within Significant Case Reviews and how they are triggered and helping with a consistent self-evaluation approach.

### **SCCPN**

Stakeholders suggested that the SCCPN provides significant value for money for the wider child protection community through the extensive contributions (in kind) of members of the working groups in terms of research generation and dissemination activities.

The Coordinator role was also highlighted by many stakeholders as one of the key strengths of the network in being able to provide value for money, both in terms of the efficiency savings of someone taking on the central coordination of research

funding bids and dissemination activities, but also the particular skills, knowledge and expertise that the current post holder brings.

## **5) What is the future role of the MARS/SCCPN?**

### ***MARS***

A number of stakeholders noted the progress that has been made in the field of child protection over the last 10-15 years with more national co-ordination and infrastructure now in place, hence more experience of local areas acting together to find collective solutions, particularly through the development of the national child protection guidance which required local areas to come together and debate the issues and potential solutions. It was suggested that the MARS should have more of a role in addressing these common issues as a centralised resource in conjunction with the CPC Chairs Forum.

One suggestion was that the focus of the MARS should be to support best and safest practice in the field by offering a framework for good practice in decision-making which may include how to manage the elements of a complex case and what elements are most effective and safest. This may also include a supportive learning framework.

The majority of stakeholders saw a continued need for the brokering service which MARS provides in terms of supporting professionals with particularly complex cases. They highlighted that there are still smaller, rural areas that will not have the breadth of expertise required to deal with these cases and that MARS fills that gap. At the same time there was acknowledgement that the larger local authorities or CPC consortia did not have as great a need for this type of service as many had their own internal support structures.

Other stakeholders felt that the MARS should be placing more focus on logging very complex cases/significant case reviews centrally and confidentially and from there providing the analysis and dissemination of best practice<sup>7</sup>. It was highlighted that this form of banking and disseminating child protection knowledge is what would make the MARS unique. There would also be merit in developing an understanding and knowledge base from international cases out with Scotland. The MARS team themselves highlighted the sensitivities in distilling learning from individual cases while also maintaining confidentiality and anonymity in a relatively small country like Scotland.

When asked what MARS future priorities should be, responses included:

- Finalising the issues around significant case reviews – whether they should be public or not
- Disseminating lessons learned from formal or informal reviews/promoting good practice

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that responsibility for the collation and dissemination of learning from Significant Case Reviews now lies with SCSWIS, Social Case and Social Work Improvement Scotland.

- Share new developments from research or what we know from existing knowledge
- Embedding the new national child protection guidance into practice
- Continuing to raise awareness and maintain links with existing networks
- A role in developing common training for Child Protection
- A role in education via conferences, seminars, promoting the website
- Embedding and developing the service that was planned and (ideally) less focus on sustainability and funding
- Strengthen links with SCCPN – relate evidence to developing good practice
- Pulling issues together in a more national sense
- Increasing the size of the CoE, publicising its existence better and ensuring easier access to it
- Continuing, through the national CPC Coordinator to be on top of the national CP agenda.

Stakeholders suggested a need for a greater understanding of the different roles involved in this multi-agency service and more encouragement for those who see themselves as supporters rather than main players to be much more active on the child protection front. Others suggested there needs to be greater awareness at a strategic level from the parent bodies such as ACPOS, COSLA, NHS Scotland, etc for them to recognise the MARS is there as a resource to be used. This would improve the MARS profile and effectiveness and also offer value and efficiency savings to local authorities who are desperately in need of this.

Three quarters of respondents to the web survey (75%, n=200) believed that there was still a continuing need for the kind of help and support that the MARS provides. When asked what suggestions respondents had for improvements to the MARS, the majority of responses related to the need for more publicity and clarification of its role and purpose.

The MARS team themselves highlighted the need to get access to, and become more involved in local practitioners forums to ensure that the voices of practitioners are heard, and are keen to develop that avenue.

## **SCCPN**

Most stakeholders felt that the original aims of the SCCPN in terms of providing a link between evidence (academia) and practice (practitioners) remained unchanged and was still valid. With regards the effectiveness of the network in being able to respond to the demands of individual practitioners then this remains an ongoing challenge both in terms of raising awareness of the network and how best to engage at the local level. At the moment, it was perceived, that engagement takes place at a more senior, strategic level (as with the MARS). On a practical level, it was acknowledged that although there are many professionals who want access to research evidence to inform practice, they may not be as prepared to (or have time to) actively seek it out through the SCCPN. There is therefore still an essential role for the network (through the Coordinator) to distil and present evidence in a more accessible format.

Stakeholders felt that the future priorities of the SCCPN should be to continue looking at the 'What Works?' agenda and plugging the gaps in the evidence base through commissioning research. Also, continuing with the current dissemination and briefings series. It was suggested by others that the SCCPN should be tightening its relationship with central government to provide a useful two-way dialogue and central resource. This also linked with suggestions for more debate and discussion in general with the wider child protection community around what was needed. Again it was proposed that members of the steering and working groups could do more to promote and disseminate the work of the network further.

In terms of the future priorities for child protection research and the network, suggestions from stakeholders included:

- Preventative approaches to child protection and successful interventions
- Older children/teenagers at risk
- Bringing in new ideas from Europe
- Learning from things that have not gone well
- How do children and families experience services
- More robust prevalence statistics
- Analysing and disseminating learning from inspection reports
- Continuing to disseminate research to practitioners in an accessible format.

Suggestions from respondents to the web survey for improvements to the SCCPN which would make it easier for them to access or apply research evidence, include:

- Any change allowing me to skim read/gain an overview of what would be relevant to my practice
- Dissemination events held in the central belt should ideally start after 10.30am to help those travelling from further afield (overnight stays are no longer sanctioned)
- Provide DVDs of the seminars
- Raise the profile of the network within Local Authorities
- Get management commitment for practitioners to be able to engage more directly with the SCCPN (and the MARS) and to allow the time and flexibility to do this
- Make sure events and discussions are relevant to practitioners not just senior professionals.

## ANNEX A: WEB SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



### Review of the MARS and the SCCPN

The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS) and the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN), based at Stirling University. The aim of the review is to provide an overview of how effective, valued and worthwhile the MARS and SCCPN are, and to make recommendations for their future sustainability and development.

We would very much welcome your views and would appreciate if you could spare approximately 10 minutes to complete this anonymous survey. Please try to answer every question and press 'send' at the end to submit your responses.

Many thanks,

Scottish Government Analytical Services

For any queries relating to the survey please contact Sharon Glen  
(Tel: 0131 244 0313)

Email: [Sharon.glen@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.glen@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

### About you

1) What is your job title?

2) What is your profession? (select only one)

Education

Health

Law

Police

Social Work

Other, please specify

3) Which sector do you work in?

Select answer

4) What is the postcode of your main place of work?

5) What is the main focus of your role?

Practice

- Strategy
- Policy
- Research
- Other, please specify

6) Are you a member of a Child Protection Committee?

- Yes  No

7) Do you work directly with children and young people?

- Yes  No



### **Part 1: The Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS)**

MARS aims to support professionals and agencies working in child protection by developing communities of expertise and sharing practice knowledge across Scotland. The primary function of the MARS is to put agencies in touch with each other and to broker the transfer of knowledge and support.

8) \* How familiar are you with the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS)?

- Very familiar
- Quite familiar
- Vaguely familiar
- Not heard of it before



9) How did you first find out about the MARS?

- Internet search
- Direct mailing
- Conference/Seminar/Event
- Newsletter
- Word of mouth
- Specialised press
- Cannot remember
- Other, please specify

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The MARS offers advice and support for professionals dealing with complex child protection cases, signposting to research and resources, the MARS website, MARSTalk (an online discussion forum), events and a regular newsletter.

10) \* Have you ever accessed any of these services provided by the MARS?

Yes

No



11) Below are examples of what the MARS offers. If you have used any of them, how would you rate their quality?

	Very poor	Fairly poor	Adequate	Fairly good	Very good	No opinion / Not used
Advice and support	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Signposting to research and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Website	<input type="checkbox"/>					
MARStalk (online discussion forum)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Events	<input type="checkbox"/>					

12) Can you tell us why you have never used the MARS? (tick all that apply)

I have never had the need

I was not previously aware of the services available

I use alternative sources of information / support / advice

I am too busy / I don't have enough time

Other, please specify



### Advice and Support Service

Agencies, councils and other organisations can approach the MARS for advice and support in dealing with complex child protection cases. Your representative can also contact MARS if you need to source some research, or need support implementing findings and recommendations from evaluations or inspections.

13) \* Have you ever contacted the MARS directly (or through a representative) for case-specific advice or support (either by telephone or email)?

Yes

No / not applicable



**14) Why did you need to contact the MARS? (tick all that apply)**

- I needed access to expertise in a specific subject area which was not available within my local area.
- The MARS was one of several sources of information and advice which I accessed for this particular query.
- The MARS was my last option available after exhausting alternative sources of advice / information
- I needed a quick response
- I was recommended the MARS by a colleague
- The MARS is always my first port of call when dealing with a complex child protection case
- Other, please specify

**15) Having contacted the MARS for case-specific advice or support, how would you rate the following?**

	Very poor	Fairly poor	Adequate	Fairly good	Very good	Not applicable
Relevance of advice or support provided	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Usefulness of advice or support provided	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Completeness of advice or support provided	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Timeliness of response	<input type="checkbox"/>					
The MARS administrative process for requesting advice or support	<input type="checkbox"/>					

**16) What difference did the advice or support provided make to you / your service? (tick all that apply)**

- It resulted in a change to our policy
- It resulted in a change to our practice
- It provided clarity to our decision-making process
- Streamlined the process for dealing with a particular case (increased efficiency)
- It reduced my / our workload
- It made no real difference
- Other, please specify

**17) Who would you have contacted for advice / support if the MARS did not exist?**

18) Who is your first port of call for advice / support on complex child protection cases?

### Communities of Expertise

MARS is aiming to build communities of expertise across Scotland to bring together knowledge, expertise, skills and experience in child welfare and protection.

19) \* Are you a member of an existing MARS Community of Expertise?

Yes  No



20) \* Are you interested in becoming a member of a Community of Expertise?

Yes  No



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For information on applying to join a Community of Expertise, please refer to the MARS website: [www.mars.stir.ac.uk](http://www.mars.stir.ac.uk)



22) It would be helpful to understand why you would not be interested in joining a Community of Expertise. Please tick all that apply:

- I don't have the time to commit to it
- The process for joining a Community of Expertise is too lengthy
- I am already a member of a different network in my own local area
- I don't have the right experience, knowledge or skills to offer
- Other, please specify



The MARS website aims to facilitate links between policy, practice and research in the field of child protection. It provides access to resources, networks, research, training materials and outlines current developments in the field. ([www.mars.stir.ac.uk](http://www.mars.stir.ac.uk)).

23) \* Have you ever used the MARS website?

- Yes often
- Yes, on one or two occasions
- No, never



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24) For what purpose do you tend to use the MARS website? (tick all that apply)

- To request advice / support on specific child protection issues
- To source publications / research evidence
- To keep up-to-date with developments in the child protection field
- To seek support in implementing recommendations from evaluations or inspections
- To access the online directory of organisations and initiatives
- To find out about the activities of Child Protection Committees
- To find out about forthcoming conferences / seminars
- To find out about Communities of Expertise (how to access or become a member)
- Other, please specify

25) How could this website be made more useful to you?

26) Would you use the MARS (again) in the future?

- Yes
- Maybe, if necessary in the future
- No, please state why

27) Do you think there is a continuing need for the kind of help and support the MARS provides?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure. Please explain:

28) Do you have any suggestions to improve the MARS?

**Part 2: The Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)**

The SCCPN is a collaborative network of academics and key stakeholders with an interest in child care and protection. The network aims to facilitate access to research evidence that can assist practice with vulnerable children and young people and their families.

29) \* How familiar are you with the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)?

- Very familiar
- Quite familiar
- Vaguely familiar
- Not heard of it before



30) How did you first find out about the SCCPN?

- Internet search
- Direct mailing
- Conference/Seminar/Event
- Newsletter
- Word of mouth
- Specialised press
- Cannot remember
- Other, please specify

The SCCPN have developed their website to reflect existing Scotland-specific evidence of what is relevant, emerging evidence from new initiatives and research, and information about current projects.

31) \* Have you ever used the SCCPN website?

- Yes often
- Yes, on one or two occasions
- No, never



32) Below are some examples of the information available on the SCCPN website. How useful do you think each of these is for you / your organisation?

	Not at all useful	Fairly useful	Useful	Very useful	No opinion / Don't know
Information about research reports	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Information about evaluation reports	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Latest news / Developments in the field	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Online directory of organisations and initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Upcoming event listings	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**33) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the SCCPN website?**

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree	No opinion / Don't know
It provides links to research that is highly relevant to my work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It has helped me expand my network of professional contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I use it to disseminate my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is my first port of call for child protection research	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It contains too much information	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I find it difficult to find my way around it	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is one of many similar sources of information on child protection research	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would recommend this site to others	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It always provides up to date information on developments in the field	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**34) How could the SCCPN website be made more useful to you?**

**SCCPN works in partnership with others to deliver a range of**

audience need.

35) \* Have you ever attended any events organised or co-hosted by the SCCPN?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / cannot remember



36) Listed below are events organised or co-hosted by the SCCPN. If you have attended any, how would you rate their usefulness?

	Not at all useful	Fairly useful	Useful	Very useful	Don't know / Didn't attend
The development of the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Using a public health approach to child protection	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Children affected by harmful parental drinking seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Ecology of Judgement in child welfare and protection	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Working with parental substance misuse workshop in your local area	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Making Significant Case Reviews Fit for Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Early intervention in parental substance misuse: working with expectant mothers using drugs and alcohol seminars	<input type="checkbox"/>				
What lessons can be learned by the police and partner agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It takes big courage: child and young people talk about living with parental alcohol problems and seeking support seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Family focused approaches to parental substance misuse seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Anxiety and child protection - implications for practice seminar	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Meeting children's needs for care and protection: data linkage and mining - vision, possibilities and practicalities	<input type="checkbox"/>				

37) To what extent do you agree / disagree with the following statements about the events organised or co-hosted by the SCCPN?

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree	No opinion / Don't know
The event(s) I attended made me think differently about the way I work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The event(s) I attended were highly relevant to my current work.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The event(s) I attended provided a useful networking opportunity.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The event(s) I attended were poorly organised.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The event(s) I attended has resulted in a change to our current policy and/or practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>				



### **Networking**

38) Which of the following groups, if any, has the SCCPN helped you develop networks with? (tick all that apply)

- Policy makers
- Practitioners
- Researchers
- Funders
- None / Not applicable
- Other, please specify

39) Can you estimate the number of professional contacts you have made through the SCCPN?

Select answer

40) Have you ever used the content of the SCCPN newsletters, events or website for the following? (tick all that apply)

- To make the case for a change to current policy/practice in a meeting
- To support a funding application
- To inform a consultation response
- To help explain a concept to colleagues
- To share with others for information
- To help colleagues in other sectors to share an understanding of what I

do

- To provide text or inform my/our publications
- To disseminate my/our own research/events
- To develop training materials
- To develop my own professional knowledge
- None of the above
- Other, please specify

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**41) Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the SCCPN which would make it easier for you to access or apply research evidence?**

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**This survey is anonymous, however we are also interested in conducting some short (10-15 minutes) follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of respondents to explore their answers in more detail. If you would be willing to take part in a short telephone interview please provide us with your name, telephone number and email address below.**

**42) Would you like to be contacted?**

Yes  No

**43) If yes, please enter your name, telephone number and email address below.**

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